

Forging Fraternity in Late Medieval Society

The Palmers' Guild of Ludlow

Rachael Harkes



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List of abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
<i>L&P</i>	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII</i> , Vols. 1–6 (London, 1862–1932)
NLW	The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth
SA	Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury
TNA	The National Archives, London

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Introduction

The small chapel dedicated to St John, which projects northwards from the chancel of the church of St Laurence, Ludlow (Shropshire), was in the decades preceding the Reformation probably one of England's most elaborate and self-assured statements of religious corporate identity.¹ It was the home of the Palmers' Guild, a religious fraternity (or guild, for the terms will be used interchangeably here) dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist that by the mid-fifteenth century was undergoing a transformation that saw it mutate from a respectable, but localised, organisation to one of both national importance and national and international reach. Perhaps seizing the opportunity presented by a substantial campaign to rebuild part of the church in the fifteenth century (to which the guild donated liberally), the Palmers constructed their chapel with the aim of reflecting and projecting their perceived status.²

The chief glory of the new scheme was the eastern window which, despite a nineteenth-century restoration that rearranged the order of two of the bottom lights, to this day vividly tells the guild's foundation legend (Figure 0.1).³ The story proffered by the window in its upper register closely follows the tale of the saintly King Edward the Confessor's ring as given in *The Golden Legend*, who in an act of charity gave his ring to a pauper – unbeknownst to Edward, the anonymous beneficiary was in fact St John the Evangelist. Sometime later, two Englishmen on pilgrimage to the Holy Land (shown in the window wearing the guild's distinctive livery as well as their pilgrims' hats) encountered St John, who, upon realising that they were English, gave them Edward's ring to return to their king. Having completed their journey and sailed home, the sainted monarch demonstrated his appreciation by granting the men the right to establish a fraternity in their hometown.⁴ The lower lights of the window blur together imagined scenes from the eleventh century (an image of Edward granting the guild's foundation charter) with contemporary fifteenth-century scenes of a guild

procession featuring the priests and clerks employed by the Palmers, followed by a civic reception at the gates of Ludlow, and, finally, a depiction of a guild feast at which a ritual demonstration of fraternal love is being performed.⁵ The chapel's east window therefore served to appropriate the combined legend of saints John the Evangelist and Edward the Confessor and to recontextualise it specifically as a foundation story for the guild, probably on the basis of the associations between the word 'palmer' and the act of pilgrimage. As Christian Liddy has argued, the window



Figure 0.1 Stained-glass window in the Palmers' Guild Chapel, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow.

‘mythologised the guild’s history and connections, providing a potent corporate identity for the guild’s members’.⁶

The whole conceit is heightened, moreover, by the near-contemporary glazing scheme of the chapel’s north wall. In the main lights, these show several images of saints and the apostles but, crucially, the donor of at least one, John Parys, warden of the guild between 1443 and 1449, is shown with his family piously kneeling at a prie-dieu, gazing suggestively towards both the chapel’s altar and the east window.⁷ Although primarily possessing a commemorative function, the effect of the inclusion of images of the Parys family is to represent the guild’s community partaking in the crucial activity of the performance of divine service, mirroring *in absentia* the guild’s living membership in attendance on festal days. Combined with visual reminders of the guild’s mythological origins, the decoration of the chapel intertwines past and present, religion and ceremony, in a way that would not have been lost on guild members. The remnants of an inscription in the east window, moreover, further underline this sense of fraternal unity by requesting prayers for the guild and its brethren.⁸ In the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, a wooden *baldacchino* was erected above the altar, heightening the sense of liturgical drama on special guild occasions, while from 1525 the narrative in the window was complemented by a carved reredos positioned above the chapel’s altar and directly below the window that included an abbreviated version of the same tale, alongside images of saints.⁹ Any visitor to the chapel on the eve of the Reformation would have been left in little doubt of how the Palmers’ Guild saw itself.

Ruminating on questions of self-perception and audience, commentators have rightly emphasised the role of the Palmers’ Guild window in exclusionary identity projection. It is a commonplace that late medieval guilds existed partly to set apart their members as a distinct social group, and that even within guild membership there were hierarchies.¹⁰ For a start, the size of the guild chapel necessarily precludes a large gathering of members, and so attendance within the boundary of the wooden screen (that still survives to demarcates the space of the chapel) on ceremonial days would probably have been restricted to only the guild priests, warden, officers and a handful of others. Parys and his family are represented in the guild’s most important space because of his role as warden and, perhaps more significantly, his generous benefaction of the chapel’s decoration; a privilege beyond the reach of the majority of the guild’s brothers and sisters. The imagery of the east window, too, further emphasises this point. It depicts only those brethren who possessed the guild’s livery, formed of parti-coloured blue and white gowns and elaborate crimson headpieces, with the warden identified by his red sash spotted with

white circles. In the final light, that which depicts the guild feast, ten liveried men sit in an intimate circle, and we can safely assume them to represent the guild's governing council.

The visual and decorative scheme of the chapel, then, presents an idealised image of the Palmers' Guild as it was wished to be seen by those who ran it. It highlighted the values of brotherhood, order, virtue, piety and the ideal mode of town–guild relations. These are what Gervase Rosser has argued comprised the medieval guild ethos and although these values underpinned the rationale of countless fraternities across pre-Reformation Europe only a select few (certainly in England and Wales) had the resources to express it to quite the same degree as the Palmers. This book is a study of the guild, but not in terms of its social or religious activities, the careers of those who occupied its offices, or the self-fashioning of its own image. Rather, the focus is on its wider membership: precisely the people *not* depicted in the guild's window. In contrast to the narrow vision of the guild represented in the stained glass, the documents produced by the guild that have come down to us can shed light on the thousands of individual lives that made up the membership of the Palmers, presenting a broad swathe of late medieval society, certainly including the guild's own wardens, priests and council, but also the entire range of its membership from royalty to paupers. Crucially, the extensive membership records allow us to ask questions about the motivations for and influences on guild membership, and in part provide an explanatory framework (over and above the idealised guild ethos identified by Rosser) for why guild membership was so extensive in late medieval England and Wales and the extent to which membership played a role in other areas of social, political and cultural life.¹¹ What follows is a new social history of medieval fraternities: although in many ways unique and idiosyncratic, the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow nevertheless presents a useful paradigm through which the centrality of guilds in medieval society can be understood.

The Palmers' Guild of Ludlow

Despite the grandiose claims made by the window in the Palmers' chapel, it is generally agreed that a foundation date of about 1250 is more reasonable than one that pre-dated the Norman Conquest.¹² This still ranks the guild as one of the longer-lived of such organisations, as it was not formally dissolved until 1551, several years after the Chantry Acts of 1545 and 1547, its demise forestalled by complex debate in the Court of Augmentations, where the guild argued that its operations did not fall

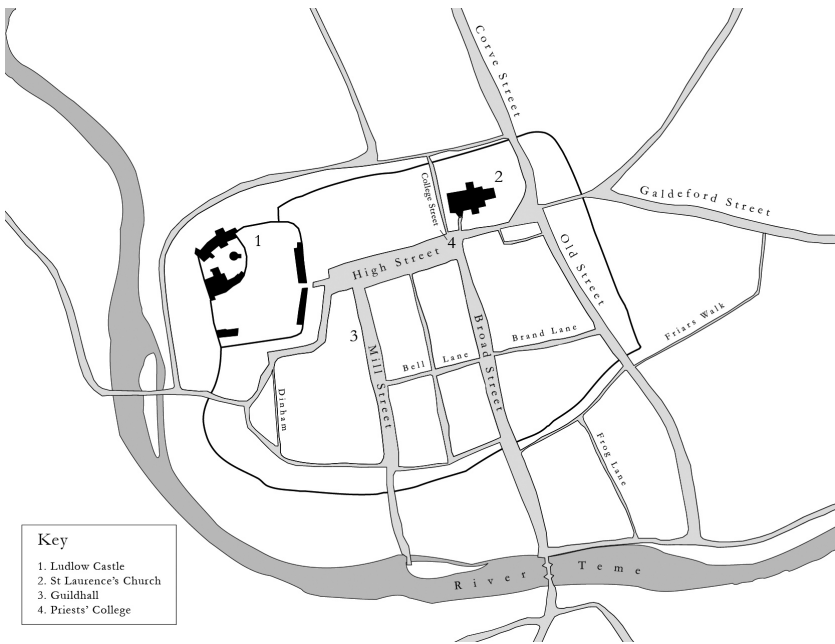
under the aegis of the acts.¹³ In many ways, throughout this long existence the guild at Ludlow functioned in very similar terms to many fraternities during the same period. A guild's *raison d'être* was to bring a group of lay men and women together with a particular devotional focus, although their purposes and practices in reality extended well beyond that, primarily through facilitating a number of religious and social activities for their members. While the most basic guilds might only possess the wherewithal to maintain a single light in a chapel or at an altar, the majority also assisted in the provision of a suitable funeral for deceased members, performed masses for their souls, hosted feasts and provided varying degrees of charity. Guilds permeated communities, often contributing large sums of money and administrative support to building projects in the parish church, enhancing the liturgical capacity of the parish through the employment of guild priests (who assisted parish priests while not engaged in guild duties), organising festivals and ales for the community and stimulating the local economy with their material requirements, particularly in relation to annual feasts and repairs of guild properties.¹⁴ This range of operations and the associated benefits made guilds numerous, popular and widespread, with an estimated 30,000 being founded in medieval England alone.¹⁵ The flexibility and protean nature of religious guilds in different communities led Derek Keene to aptly describe them as 'shell organisations', adapting to the needs and desires of their community.¹⁶ Most fulfilled these functions within a relatively restricted geographical area, providing spiritual and financial support, along with social and moral benefits, for individuals who lived in reasonably close proximity to the guild's base.

Evidence for activity of this nature abounds for the Palmers' Guild. For example, a common function of guilds (the Palmers included) was the performance of obits (annual services performed in remembrance of a deceased individual) for those members who left bequests for such a purpose. Over thirty obits were requested of the guild priests by brethren in Ludlow between 1397 and 1530, and the guild diligently recorded the payments spent on these occasions each year.¹⁷ The guild's bellman was paid 2s 8d for alerting local members that their presence was required at obits, and the services were conducted by the guild's priests, who at any time numbered between three and ten.¹⁸ Alongside the duties of commemorating certain individuals, the priests were also paid to pray for the souls of all deceased brothers and sisters.¹⁹ A number of men and children were engaged by the guild as singers, and the chantry certificate in 1546 states that the guild supported an additional six choristers to sing the divine service.²⁰ The guild's janitor handled more practical matters: in charge of general maintenance within the church, he was, for example, paid for his

labour at ‘diverse’ obits.²¹ Within the parish church, the guild contributed to its material upkeep, supplying building materials and funding, as well as supporting the church’s capacity to perform the liturgy.²² Such an example can be found in 1446/7, when the Palmers set aside a portion of their income to purchase 100 wainscot boards from Bristol to make choir stalls, which remain in the church to this day.²³ Such a commission not only served the practical purpose of providing seating for the choristers but did so in a way that elevated the setting through the presence of elaborate carving and craftsmanship and enhanced the reputation of both guild and church. Each year, the guild noted the money spent ‘for the making of St John’s light’ (for example, 16d was spent in 1532), presumably in the guild chapel, honouring their patron saint.²⁴ Governed by a council of elders, a warden and two stewards, the guild also became integrated into the local community’s secular activities, particularly its political structures: its officers were usually members of Ludlow’s common council and held the positions of bailiffs and aldermen.²⁵ In these aspects, the Palmers differed little from all but the smallest guilds.

Where the Palmers’ Guild departs is in its membership, at least in the latter years of the guild’s existence. From the earliest days, probably in the mid-thirteenth century, the nature of its brethren was largely unremarkable, in that membership was primarily clustered within Ludlow, where the guild was based (a small, compact, walled town as illustrated in [Map 0.1](#)), and the surrounding region (which, given Ludlow’s location, included north Herefordshire, south Shropshire and the Marcher lordships of Clun, Bishop’s Castle, Wigmore and Richards Castle), with a few outliers in areas with which the town’s inhabitants had historic trading links, such as Bristol.²⁶ But in the second half of the fifteenth century the membership reach of the Palmers’ Guild, both geographically and socially, changed dramatically, and by the turn of the sixteenth century it was recruiting over a thousand new members each year. By 1521, the last year for which dedicated membership documents survive, at least 18,731 individuals had at some point committed their names to the books of the Palmers – over 15,000 of them between 1497 and 1521.²⁷ These members were from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from a beggar and labourers to merchants, gentlemen and royalty, and were drawn from across England and Wales.

How did the Palmers achieve such widespread popularity? Why were thousands of men and women drawn towards the guild in Ludlow in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? What influenced an individual’s decision to become a member and what does that reveal about the influence of communities upon individual decision-making in late medieval society? These are the questions this study seeks to answer.



Map o.1 Ludlow in the fourteenth century. Map by Richard Asquith.

Guild recruitment and membership

First, however, it is necessary to outline exactly how the guild affected this profound transformation and to take a closer look at the demographics of membership that followed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The earliest surviving evidence suggests that – during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – membership of the guild was predicated on the provision of rent charges; that is, the gift of a portion of a rent from a property (usually in Ludlow) to the guild.²⁸ It should be noted, however, that only a few receipts of membership survive for this period. Regardless, the mid-fourteenth century certainly saw a shift in the Palmers' membership recruitment policy, perhaps stemming from the fact that they began to develop through *enfeoffment* a substantial property portfolio of their own, which offered a more lucrative income and both encouraged a more proactive membership policy and provided the means to pursue it.²⁹ Accordingly, it is in the later fourteenth century that the first membership lists survive, and these demonstrate that by this date the guild had expanded the horizons of its operation and was what might be termed a regional guild, soliciting membership from as far afield as Bristol in return for the payment of a fee of 6s 8d.³⁰ This became the standard entrance fee,

although later records demonstrate that there were exceptions to the total payable amount – deceased members were enrolled at a reduced rate of 3s 4d, while deceased Ludlow natives cost their relatives only 2s.³¹

Further developments followed, and these represent an active and sustained interest in cultivating and increasing the reach of the guild. The Palmers continually adapted their payment policies to suit the changing nature of the guild in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The early to mid-fifteenth century saw the fixed fee of membership usually being paid in two or three parts.³² From the 1440s, the same documents begin to include occasional payments of much smaller sums, indicating that exceptions were being made depending on individual circumstances: this was a shift that precipitated the Palmers' later successes.³³ It is perhaps no coincidence that this was around the same time the guild was so forcefully expressing its own sense of identity in the rebuilding of the chapel. By the early sixteenth century, however, this system was taken even further as most people took to paying these small sums in instalments until the full sum was settled.³⁴ This practice questions the general view of the restrictive nature of guild admission fees, as 1d or 2d (the lowest recorded payments) was arguably a relatively attainable sum to provide yearly, or even less frequently, for those of more limited means. Small payments, suited to each individual's financial circumstance, allowed a more heterogeneous make-up than other leading town guilds with one-off admission fees, such as the Holy Trinity in Bishop's Lynn which charged the substantial sum of £5.³⁵ The Palmers provided a means by which even the poorer members of society could enjoy the benefits of belonging to a guild. The entrance fee, at 6s 8d per person,³⁶ was a fairly standard sum (if perhaps on the lower end) for national or regional guild admission fees: Boston's St Mary's guild also charged 6s 8d, but Stratford's Holy Cross charged 13s 4d for men and 6s 8d for women, while it has been suggested that Coventry's Holy Trinity – like the guild of the same dedication in Bishop's Lynn – had a £5 admission fee.³⁷ The key departure of the Palmers, however, was the overwhelmingly common trend of staggered payments – very few people entered into the guild having paid the full amount in a single sum.

In total, almost 5,000 individuals completed their payments – approximately twenty-eight per cent of those who began contributions. Reasons for failing to pay the full membership fee (which is further explored in [Chapter 2](#)) were probably diverse: death, bankruptcy and personal choice were all factors. Moreover, these attitudes towards payment and membership can be partially explained by the absence of a fine for missing a payment. No charge was levied for a pause in regular payments or for ceasing payments completely. For example, John and Agnes Peenlloyd of Lady Halton (Shropshire) halted their membership contributions between

1507 and 1511 before resuming payments until 1517.³⁸ Allowing individuals to contribute to their membership fee as they wished, or as their circumstances allowed, provided a flexibility not found with other institutions and created a socially and economically diverse community of brothers and sisters.³⁹

This system of payment was coupled with a willingness by the guild to travel to collect membership fees. Each year, the guild's two stewards, each accompanied by a clerk, embarked on separate journeys across the kingdom, taking payments and recording names in various locations as they went. These two factors permitted the guild to both promote and manage an extensive base of membership, maintaining a presence in most counties and towns in England and Wales, transforming the Palmers from a primarily regional guild to one of the kingdom's furthest reaching. By the sixteenth century, the guild counted members from as diverse locations as Sussex in the south-east, up into East Anglia, through the East Midlands up to Hull in the East Riding of Yorkshire, across to Westmorland, down through the Midlands, Wales and through parts of the West Country and back to central England. Part of this success was almost certainly down to the fact that the stewards' rides eliminated the need for members to journey to Ludlow to pay membership contributions each year.

The maps here ([Maps 0.2–0.11](#)) demonstrate the point clearly, representing the years for which extensive and relatively complete membership records survive. Every new member whose enrolment is recorded between 1497/8 and 1515/16 is plotted, covering a total of 822 locations. Identifying the locations of members from the records is, at times, challenging: some places, such as Egerton (Shropshire), no longer survive, and archaeological reports were used to determine the most suitable easting and northing coordinates.⁴⁰ Two further challenges arise: firstly, many places have the same name (Newport, for example, can be found in Gloucestershire, Shropshire and Montgomeryshire); secondly, English scribes did not always spell Welsh places as expected. To overcome both these challenges, contextual information offered by the manuscript must be used to determine the location in question: the places listed before and after in the guild's collection routes prove helpful in making a correct identification.

The maps serve to illustrate the breadth of membership of the Ludlow guild. While it is not possible to include the thousands of individuals whose names, locations and personal information were transcribed and entered into a database for this project, the maps plot each of those individuals as a point (or as part of proportionate circle that represents a large number of individuals from that place) and allows the quantitative data underpinning this study to be represented in a productive way for the reader. Over and above that, these are the first maps to plot the full extent of



Map 0.2 Locations of all new members, 1497-1516.



Map 0.3 Recruitment of new members, 1497-1501.



Map 0.4 Recruitment of new members, 1501/2.



Map 0.5 Recruitment of new members, 1502/3.



Map o.6 Recruitment of new members, 1503/4.



Map o.7 Recruitment of new members, 1504/5.



Map 0.8 Recruitment of new members, 1505/6.



Map 0.9 Recruitment of new members, 1506/7.



Map o.10 Recruitment of new members, 1507/8.



Map o.11 Recruitment of new members, 1515/16.

membership from surviving sources of any late medieval fraternity. They allow membership to be visualised and understood in a new manner, particularly in allowing us to understand the effect of the topography of Wales and England upon recruitment patterns.

Turning to [Map 0.2](#), which contains the places of all members noted in the membership accounts for 1497–1516, a few important patterns emerge. Wales, the Welsh Marches and the Midlands were naturally the strongest regions for membership, with the overall density of membership thinning the greater the distance from Ludlow. Sometimes recruitment appears to have followed main trade routes, such as the clustering of membership along the Thames Valley down into London. Individual manors, villages, towns and cities exhibited varying degrees of consistency in their enrolment each year. For instance, with the exception of 1501/2, Machynlleth (Powys) – famously the site of Owain Glyndŵr's Welsh Parliament in 1404 – provided up to twenty new Palmers each year ([Maps 0.3–0.11](#)).⁴¹ Carmarthen (Carmarthenshire) was similarly fairly steady in its recruitment, ranging between eight and thirty-one new members a year. As might be expected, the Palmers regularly found many new recruits in urban centres like Shrewsbury, Hereford, Gloucester, Derby, Coventry and Bristol. Slightly smaller settlements, such as Denbigh (Denbighshire) and Oswestry (Shropshire), were also relatively strong centres of recruitment. Many rural locations, however, did not consistently recruit new members each year. Sandford St Martin (Oxfordshire) only contributed two members in 1515/16 ([Map 0.10](#)) and is otherwise absent from the guild's recruitment lists.⁴²

Complementing the geographical spread of the guild was its social make-up, and the two were a dual result of the administrative policy pursued by the guild as described above. Historians have largely assumed that guild membership generally was exclusive in nature, limited to the wealthier members of the parish.⁴³ Urban guilds especially are seen as an outlet for the rise of what early modernists call the 'middling sort', and as a form of distinctly mercantile religious expression. Indeed, large numbers of the mercantile elite from across the kingdom are accounted for in the surviving records of the Palmers. As the mercantile elite strove to forge an identity, the institutions they constructed, whether in the form of a town government or a guild, can be (and have been) seen as oligarchical, self-reciprocating and defined by selection from among members of their own community.

While there is no doubt as to the level of sustained investment in guilds by the mercantile elite, the involvement of the gentry has been a source of contention. The traditional view of gentry piety as largely self-interested, with investment taking the form of private chantries, chapels

and altars, has been called into question.⁴⁴ Rather, it is now generally accepted that the gentry integrated themselves wholeheartedly and genuinely into the parish, spurred by wider commemorative and devotional impulses, and that this involvement was not just an arbitrary token of their status. This revisionist view is compounded by the evidence that the lesser nobility and gentry tended to join large guilds with some frequency.⁴⁵ The Palmers further prove instructive, with extraordinary numbers of the aristocracy joining in force. For example, Sir Richard Sacheverell, MP and receiver-general to Edward Hastings, second baron Hastings, joined in 1501/2, alongside his master's brother, Sir William Hastings.⁴⁶ Local gentry are entered in the records as having paid membership fines, such as Elizabeth, wife of Philip Basterfeld of Hereford, but so, too, are gentry from further afield, like William Kaye and his wife, of Lincoln, whose epithet in the stewards' 'riding book' (see below for a discussion of the guild's records) described him as gentleman.⁴⁷ Kaye was one of several hundred individuals recorded in guild documents whose status was invoked in this way.

Noble involvement in the guild encompassed both secular and ecclesiastical lords. It was not unusual for large town guilds to rank among their members great men and women who could be considered token noble patrons. Two successive queens on opposite sides of the Wars of the Roses, Margaret of Anjou (widow of Henry VI) and Elizabeth Woodville (wife of Edward IV), joined the Assumption Fraternity attached to London's Skinners' Company in the 1470s and both were pictorially depicted in the guild's register.⁴⁸ The guild of the Holy Cross at Stratford was clearly proud to admit George, Duke of Clarence (brother to Edward IV), and his family in 1477/8, as the scribe employed particularly extravagant handwriting for their entry in the register.⁴⁹ In the same year, the Corpus Christi Guild in York recorded the entry of Clarence's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and his wife, Anne Neville, into the guild.⁵⁰ The Palmers, on the other hand, had a longer and arguably more prestigious association with the house of York. George and Richard's father, Richard, Duke of York, joined the Palmers in 1438, and his son, Edward IV, gifted the guild £5 in 1472/3 as his membership fee.⁵¹ It is likely that all of this was much in the same vein – guild membership could act as a gesture on the part of the greater nobility to ensure their position in the heart of the lands that constituted their power: the house of York's Mortimer inheritance made Ludlow castle one of their most important seats.⁵²

Although the large numbers of the nobility and gentry who joined the guild represent an important social dimension of guild historiography, they were, like the merchants, people of means who could easily afford to pay the fees that entitled membership to the guild. Indeed, it is often the

price of membership that is cited as the exclusionary factor of late medieval guilds.⁵³ But the social composition of the Palmers' membership compels us to move beyond these traditionally held views: the guild was in fact extraordinarily inclusive. To demonstrate this point, an extremely poignant case is the entry of John Tasler, described as a beggar, recorded in 1428/9.⁵⁴ Another example of note is Alice Barker, a midwife from Coventry who began payments in 1501.⁵⁵ Numerous small-scale agricultural and manual workers, such as husbandmen and labourers, also joined.⁵⁶ These individuals do not immediately spring to mind as members of a guild that admitted the likes of the civic elite, the gentry and the nobility, including royalty. Even the 'poor people's guild' of St Austin, Norwich, was not so inclusive, as it purposely offered its poor members a dignified status to distinguish them from the transient beggar, who was viewed as the 'real outsider'.⁵⁷

An overview of the members of the Palmers therefore makes clear the guild's curious nature and demonstrates the need to understand how the guild was embedded in rural and urban landscapes across late medieval England and Wales. In thinking about the motivation for, and significance attached to, membership of this fraternity, the social heterogeneity of the guild cautions against straightforward, generalising explanations. The inclusion of regular and secular clergy, labourers and husbandmen, servants, apprentices and masters, gentry and nobility within the ranks of the guild underlines the importance of examining the motivations of joining a guild and the resulting multifaceted meanings attached to guild membership.

In terms of the size and spread of membership, the Palmers' Guild should therefore be considered a 'national' or 'great' fraternity, and numbered among the kingdom's leading guilds, such as those of St Mary, Boston, and the Jesus Guild at St Paul's Cathedral, London.⁵⁸ Throughout this study, the Palmers will be compared with other guilds of a similar standing, alongside those which, although still substantial in relative terms, had a lesser membership reach. The issue here is largely one of terminology, as these are modern epithets applied retrospectively which, in any case, have never been precisely defined. Here I will use the term 'regional guild' to refer to institutions whose membership was relatively extensive but largely confined to its home county or those immediately surrounding. On the other hand, a 'national guild' was one whose membership (like the Palmers) extended beyond this reach and was distributed widely (if not evenly) across the kingdom. Indeed, the Palmers exceeded even this definition, by virtue of the enrolment of several aliens (non-denizens) over the course of its lifetime, as well as actively recruiting in English outposts on the Continent.⁵⁹

Historical approaches to guilds and communities

Putting the membership of a national guild under the microscope departs from the established routes of studying religious guilds in medieval England. Many studies have taken a localised focus and tend to centre on a single institution – or a group of institutions – within a certain geographical range (such as a county or region), asking questions about their charitable, pious and political activities.⁶⁰ As a result, institutional studies are plentiful, simultaneously capturing the socio-economic impact of guilds in carefully delineated geographical regions.⁶¹ Scholarship of this type enjoyed a marked popularity in the 1990s and early 2000s and, while now less prolific, remains an important current in discussion on late medieval guilds.⁶²

Notable exceptions to this trend are the work of Ben McRee and Gervase Rosser, who have both approached guilds from a more conceptual perspective. McRee's studies have surveyed guilds across England to ask precisely how charitable these organisations were and how they regulated the behaviour of their members.⁶³ This represents an ambitious attempt to capture a broad range of experiences from the perspective of guilds and fraternities. Rosser likewise self-consciously diverges from traditional guild histories in both his essays and his monograph *The Art of Solidarity*, which, in his words, is interested 'not in the guilds as structures, but in the social, political, and moral processes which were catalysed by participation in these diverse associations'.⁶⁴ His emphasis, therefore, lies in how guilds can be used as a medium through which we might understand the intersection of individuals and society in the Middle Ages. Taking a thematic approach hinged on ethics, morality, friendship and community, Rosser implicitly calls for scholars to think more critically about the relationship and tensions between individuals and the historic society of which they were a part.

The present study is a conscious response to the new direction forged by Rosser's conceptual overview of the aspirations and ideals of medieval guilds. The purpose is to uncover and chart the connections between individual guild members, both with the Palmers as an institution but also among one another, viewed under the umbrella of the shared experiences of guild membership. In this sense, and by deploying the extraordinarily rich records of the Palmers' guild (as outlined below), it presents a close examination of one particular institution but framed not as a traditional institutional study; rather it is an investigation of the real relationships forged and utilised between individuals and a specific community to which they belonged. It therefore adds contours and depth to Rosser's more conceptual overview.

Where this study departs most dramatically from accepted notions of guild membership, however, is in its conception of their ‘voluntary’ nature. To join a guild, it is normally argued, was a voluntary act.⁶⁵ It was not – as far as we know – an action taken under duress or threat of physical or pecuniary punishment, and neither was its membership conferred or imposed externally, as was the case in membership of a parish, which was automatically dictated by the location of one’s residence. The choice inherent in electing to become part of a guild community bound one to others within society, generating obligations to fellow members as well as offering earthly and spiritual rewards. But this decision was not an isolated one: the surrounding environment (in social, political and economic terms) nudged some, and pushed others, into fraternal membership. As will become clear as each chapter unfolds, it is possible to reconstruct some of these pressures and it is necessary to account for them in our understanding of what motivated guild membership and what its impact was in terms of the role it played in the lives of its members. This is not to argue that a particular set of circumstances or experiences set one on an inevitable path towards guild membership, but rather that the decision to engage in a community of this nature was subject to certain influences and that, within this, there were opportunities for different levels of involvement, subject to conditions such as geography, familial and social relations and, indeed, a degree of personal preference and inclination. In other words, some people that joined a national fraternity such as the Palmers’ Guild were encouraged to do so by their environment, but they were not compelled to engage wholeheartedly with either their brethren or the structures of the guilds itself. Yet, for those that wished to, there were bountiful opportunities for involvement with a community that repaid interaction to the mutual benefit of both.

Guild records and social history

The main body of materials used throughout this book comprises the guild’s own archive, consisting of deeds, membership records (in the form of notes of debt, receipts and lists of names), financial accounts (detailing both income and expenditure), inventories and indulgences. This is an astonishing range of documentation for any medieval institution, let alone one that was largely religious in purpose. When the guild was dissolved in 1551, the civic responsibilities that it had held for over a century (such as maintaining a school and an almshouse) were transferred to the Corporation of Ludlow.⁶⁶ Although the most important class of document in this respect was property deeds, given that the endowments of these

institutions were financed through rents from properties gifted originally to the guild, and so the evidence relating to ownership, maintenance and tenants were transferred with a view to evidence the Corporation's claim should the need arise, it is apparent that a large proportion of the guild's muniment chest was preserved.

The guild owned extensive property within Ludlow and the surrounding area, as well as further afield in Shropshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Wiltshire. As many as 1,462 deeds survive in the guild's archive, often as series which trace a property's ownership prior to the guild's acquisition. Some deeds detail the gift of rent from properties (rather than ownership) to the guild.⁶⁷ These deeds are used throughout the book to uncover small communities within the guild's membership, as they record the grantors, grantees, feoffees and witnesses in a wide range of localities in which the guild operated, and therefore offer valuable insights into specific social interactions between the guild and its members.⁶⁸

Annual accounts from officers of the guild (stewards, wardens and rental officers) survive in relative abundance, totalling forty-one across the period 1344 to 1547. In comparison to the 300-year lifetime of the guild, this leaves the historian attempting to reconstruct the guild's activity with a significant lacuna to overcome. Nonetheless, the nature of a fraternity, as an organisation that was at once religious and secular, is embodied in these accounts. The guild's role as a landlord resulted in detailed recording of rents, overseen by two officers, with each property accounted for with the names of the tenants and the sums received. Rents were the primary source of income for employing guild priests and, as the perpetual obits for which the guild was responsible were funded by landed endowments, payments to the guilds' priests, as well as to the rector and deacons of the parish church, for their attendance at obits were recorded in the rental accounts.⁶⁹ Other facets of the guild's activity are revealed through the recording of payments to those lords who owned the moiety or lordship in which the guild held property, namely Ludlow itself, Shrewsbury, Richards Castle, Stoke and Eastham.⁷⁰ Expenses for repairing property and hosting feasts, along with gifts to the guild from benefactors, can also be found. These rolls are therefore invaluable in detailing both the shape and substance of the guild's economic relationships with ecclesiastical and secular authorities, in addition to the religious activities that were funded by rents.

For the study of membership, with which this book is primarily concerned, there are a number of fundamental sources. With changes to the guild's administrative structure throughout the fifteenth century, as discussed above, the system of fee collection developed into a highly complex

procedure, the aim of which was to keep track of membership. Inference has already been made to some of these records: lists of debt for payments (known as *debitoria*), ‘riding books’, clerks’ receipt books and registers of admission. The *debitoria* record payments from fifteenth-century guild members, surviving in fragmentary form from 1423 to 1443, allowing a glimpse of both the social composition of membership during this period and the evolving administrative structures that supported it.⁷¹

On their rides to collect membership fees, the guild stewards were naturally compelled to process and record great volumes of information, particularly at the apogee of the guild in the early decades of the sixteenth century. These journeys involved the recruitment of new members and the collection of fees from existing members, and the recording of these details were delegated to the clerks that accompanied the stewards. Two types of documents were produced as part of this process: the clerks’ receipt books and the so-called ‘riding books’. The former were working documents created on the journey itself, the information subsequently being copied into the riding books upon the return to Ludlow (‘riding books’ therefore being something of a misnomer). The clerks’ receipt books are arranged in two sections: the first records the enrolment of new brothers and sisters, noting details such as their name, location, occupation and value of their initial payment; the second is briefer and captures payments made by existing members, referring only to the initial year of enrolment (delineated by name of the steward at that time, so that the individual can be looked up in the correct year in the riding books), the name, location and payment for that year. These are working documents: shorthand is used at all times for stewards’ names, individuals are grouped under wide geographic areas (that is to say, those from small villages would be recorded under large towns, rather than their own village) and only strictly necessary information is recorded. For example, as illustrated in [Figure 0.2](#), ‘Marget ferch Llywelyn 4 Bra[gott] 4d’ was listed under the heading of Caernarfon. This informed the steward and the clerk that Margaret joined in the fourth year of Richard Bragott’s stewardship (1508/9) and so they should find her name in the riding book for that year, on the folio(s) for Caernarfon, and update it to show that she had paid 4d.

The riding books, on the other hand, are a much fuller resource as they include all of the information that the stewards’ collected when individuals first joined the guild, and are therefore a valuable membership record and will be used extensively across this study. The entries do vary in the level of detail provided about each guild member, but the most complete examples include a member’s name (and social status, if relevant), place of residence, occupation (and master if the payee was a servant or apprentice) and the total fee to pay. Then, under each name, a guild

officer would list payments the individual had made towards their membership fee – updated each year after the steward and clerk returned to Ludlow.⁷² Taking into account the fact that each riding book might contain entries for at least 1,000 individuals (and often more), at no more than a dozen individuals per folio (at the high end), these manuscripts are bulky and were clearly unsuitable for the stewards to carry around with them on their rides. Their purpose was to ensure that only individuals who had paid the required entry fee in full would have their names entered on the registers of admission.

This sophisticated documentary system is a result of the guild's practice of payment-by instalment, recording individuals and their portfolio of payments. Some entries in the riding books are lengthy, such as that of Hugo ap Thomas of Oswestry (Shropshire), who made twenty-two separate payments towards his joint membership with his wife Katherine over many years.⁷³ Husbands and wives might sign up at the same time; in which case the wife's name would be written at the end of the entry, for example 'John Dee of Bristol, tailor, and Katherine his wife, 13s 4d'.⁷⁴ Some individuals were given descriptors not associated with an occupation, and instead were assigned their social position: 'wife of', 'singlewoman' or 'singleman'.⁷⁵ Examples include Henry Cutt, singleman from Warwick, Eleanor Wright, singlewoman from Birmingham and Elisabeth Coton, widow, who could be found 'at the sign of the unicorn' in Lichfield.⁷⁶

The riding books and the receipt books are arranged geographically, reflecting the course of the stewards' rides. Usually headed by a town, the members listed thereunder would either be from that specific location or neighbouring villages and manors. For cities, particularly Bristol, Coventry and London, a parish might be given as an additional identifier. Oxford colleges were included in the entries for those studying and working there, as was the clerical college in Warwick.⁷⁷ Some headings simply note counties or *extranei* – a generic heading that grouped various 'strangers' from a range of places.⁷⁸ The location of each member was a vital piece of information for the stewards, not least for the practical purpose of locating members to collect fees. It may also have worked for the stewards to be able to bring together groups of local Palmers on their annual visits, as will be explored in [Chapter 1](#). Yet in the mobile society of the late Middle Ages, circumstances could change as people moved; the Palmers' administrative system could therefore be adapted to cater for this mobility. The importance of keeping current records of a member's location must have been present in the minds of the guild officers as the riding books record locational changes in the margin next to the appropriate entries. When Edward Doen paid 8d in 1515, the clerk assisting the steward Henry Capper recorded that Doen had moved from Castle Ashby (Northamptonshire) to

Codington (Cheshire).⁷⁹ Richard Longley and his wife moved from Bridgnorth, Shropshire (where they initially signed up), to Chester, and this change of residence is reflected in their entry.⁸⁰ These emendations happened with a certain degree of regularity, providing yet another example of the meticulous administration of the guild – a necessity for any organisation dealing with thousands of individuals at any one time.

Remarkably, transience and impermanence are also visible in the guild's records. For example, in 1511, Roger Towres paid 4d to the steward of the guild while in Chester, and is noted in the receipt book under that city as 'Roger Towres sub Stafford 3 Dyer' (Figure 0.2).⁸¹ This note provided a means of navigating the riding books in Ludlow by referring the user first to the third year in which Richard Dyer was steward (1499–1500) and second to the heading under that year for Stafford (not Chester, as would be the case for all other entries in that section). This suggests that Towres was only in Chester temporarily and is revealing of the efficacy of the Palmers' administrative processes. A consultation of the relevant riding book shows that this charge was duly recorded under his name (Figure 0.3).⁸² It is tempting to speculate from this evidence the extent of Towres' dedication in completing his admission fee: he was consistent in annual payments ranging from 4d to 8d for a period of nine years, although he never completed the 13s 4d fee for himself and his wife.⁸³ The Palmers' presence in the town must have been well advertised to the extent that their members knew to pay their dues, and clearly that knowledge was disseminated even to those visiting the town. Towres was not alone in paying his fees in a location different from that to which he lived. When John Kene made a payment of 3s 4d in Tenby (Pembrokeshire) in 1511, a note in the receipt book reminded the steward Thomas Clonton to look under Bristol when transferring his payment to the riding books.⁸⁴ It is unusual for this level of granular detail about individual lives to have survived. While these documents showcase the mobility of late medieval society, they also underscore how guild records are a valuable resource for enhancing our understanding of medieval society in general. The mobility of the Palmers and its stewards suited individuals who were similarly mobile and provided members with the distinct advantage that they could continue contributing to their fee no matter their location.

The final class of document to be noted are the registers of admission. Once individuals had paid the full 6s 8d of their membership fee, their name would be transferred to a register, indicating that they were now fully enrolled in the guild. There are notably fewer registers relating to the Palmers' Guild than other extant records, surviving only for the years 1412–22, 1485–9 and 1505–9.⁸⁵ Each register is headed with a preamble, outlining that the ensuing names became brothers and sisters of the

[illegible]

Figure 0.2 A folio from the clerk's receipt book. The first section is for those paying in Caernarfon, followed by those paying in Chester. Margaret ferch Llywelyn's entry is the sixth on the folio and Roger Towres' is the twelfth. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 5v.

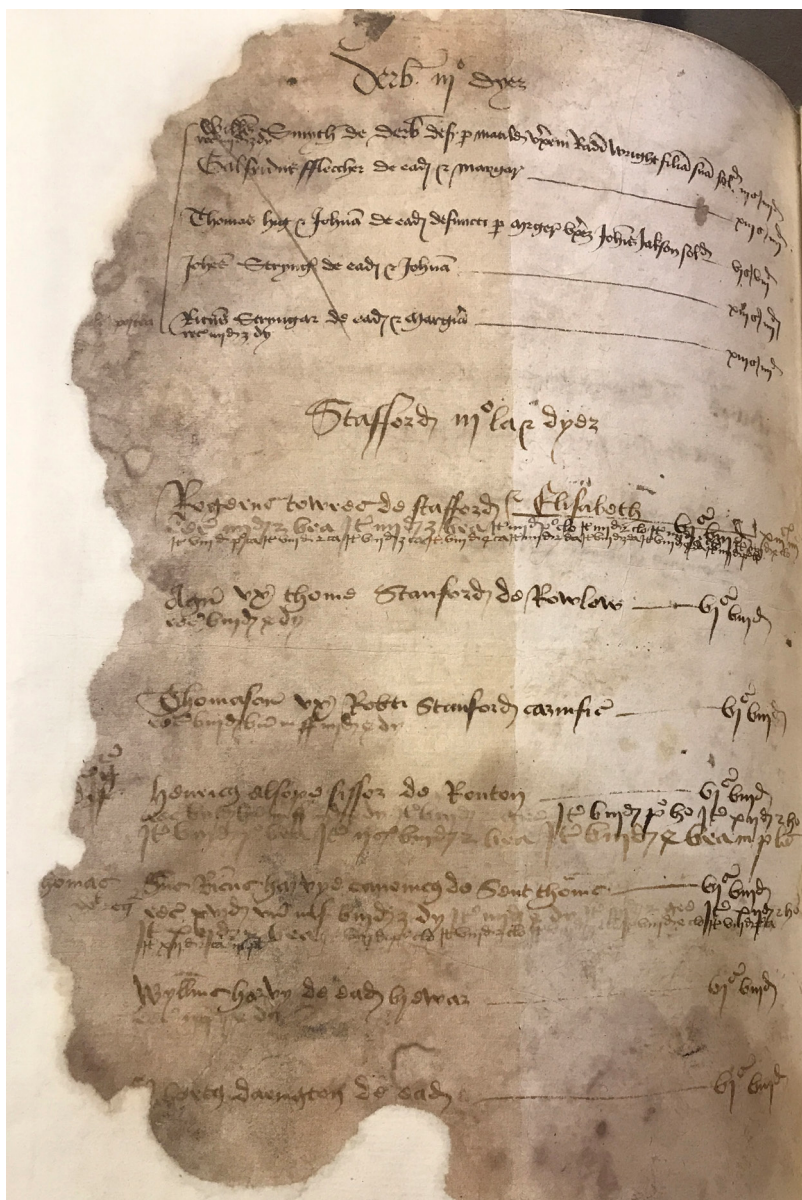


Figure 0.3 A folio of the 'riding book' containing Roger Towres' entry, along with his wife Elizabeth. His contribution of 4d while in Chester (Figure 0.2) is simply noted as '4d 3 Clo', signalling that the steward Roger Clonton received 4d from him in the third year of his office. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 133v.

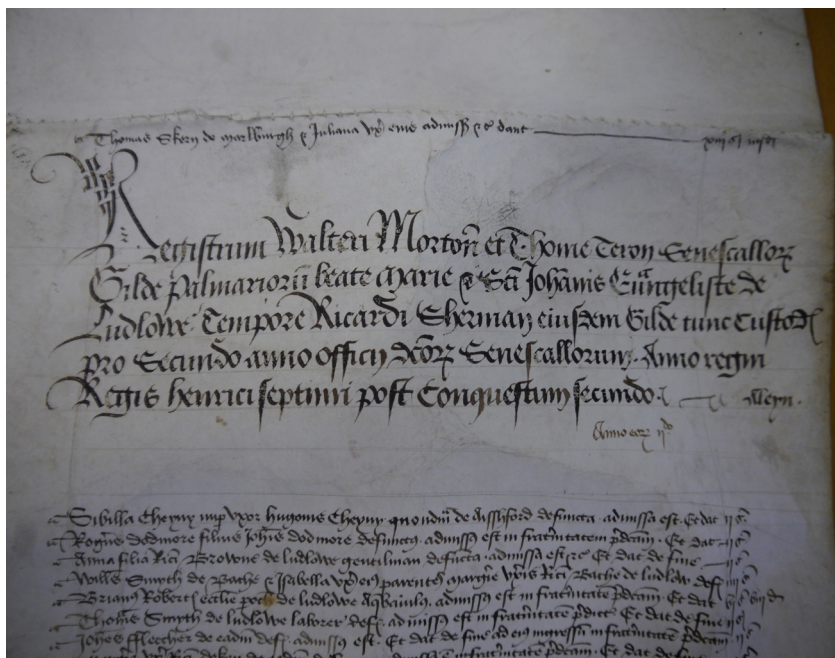


Figure 0.4 Register of Admission, 1488/9. SA: LB/5/1/2.

Palmers in a certain year, along with the names of the wardens and stewards of that year (Figure 0.4). Importantly, names were enrolled under the year that an individual *began* paying their fee, not the year that they completed. Cross-referencing the riding books and registers confirms this is the case. For example, William Veyll began payments in 1505/6 and completed his 6s 8d fee in 1514 but his name can be found in the 1505/6 register.⁸⁶ The registers ostensibly served as a final record of guild members, although may also have acted akin to a bede roll, in which capacity the list of names would have been recited by guild priests as a prayer for members and to commend others to do the same. Nevertheless, these registers can be frustratingly opaque documents, little more than a list of names organised by year; Robert Swanson wryly likened them to telephone directories.⁸⁷

When it comes to the purpose of these documents and how they were used by the guild's officers, it is not just the written words that provide answers: the materiality of the records is equally revealing. Within the guild's administration there was a clear divide between working and finished documents. From the 1460s onwards, working accounts – membership contributions, rental and operational costings – were produced on paper. These survive in various formats. Receipts of fee collection, as well as

expenditure while on the road collecting fees, survive as loose sheets of paper, with clear fold marks and discolouration on what must have been the exterior of the folded paper bundle.⁸⁸ The majority of receipts from the sixteenth century (written by guild clerks) survive in a small but thick volume (approximately 4 cm deep without its boards, containing 263 folios), which was bound after creation.⁸⁹ Several folios are of differing sizes, while others bear evidence of being folded into small squares.⁹⁰ Each year of membership receipts are headed with a title page, of which many are darker and discoloured compared to the pages for the remainder of that year, which suggests that they were the front pages of pamphlets.⁹¹ The clerk's writing within confirms the manuscript's mobile nature, as it is riddled with remembrances regarding individuals and circumstances of their repayment. For example, the entry of a deceased couple, William ap Madoc and Gwenllian ferch Dafydd of Welshpool (Powys), was accompanied by a note to look for them in the records back in Ludlow to see if they were already brethren or not. These remembrances were also accompanied throughout the receipt book by scribbles at the bottom of folios that note when a page of new recruits was 'entered and registered' or a page of receipts from existing members had been 'corrected and registered' in the riding books.⁹² Furthermore, as discussed above, the list of members for each town contains notations beside each name and payment: the name of the steward and his corresponding year of his term (one through four) under which they had originally enrolled. This information was necessary to collect in order for the clerk to find the corresponding riding book when he returned to Ludlow, to update the payment record for the individual as required. In the case of these receipt books, then, their physical nature is a crucial element in understanding the activities of the guild and reinforces their extensive activities outside of Ludlow. The guild's commitment to travelling to recruit and engage with members is evinced in the materiality of their archive.

All surviving riding books are likewise made of paper, in varying states of preservation, with most pages suffering decay on the edges and some missing almost half of the outer portion of the folios. Near complete folios measure 22.4 × 28 cm and each riding book may have originally contained upwards of 82 folios.⁹³ A number of folios throughout the riding books have watermarks which vary within and across each book, suggesting that the guild built up a reserve of paper that it drew on as needed, rather than using the same run of paper for each riding book. They are consistently a variation of a glove with a six-point trefoil arising out of stem from the middle finger.⁹⁴ For example, one watermark in an early sixteenth-century riding book contains the initial 'B' in the centre of the glove, while later accounts have a glove with a crown suspended above them.⁹⁵

In comparison, final copies of accounts (often compiled from multiple officers), along with lists of those brethren who completed their membership fees, were written on parchment. So when the steward Richard Hoore noted down the money he spent on brethren in locations across England, he wrote it on paper.⁹⁶ This sum was then recorded in the final accounts for the year, written on parchment.⁹⁷ The final surviving document created by the guild in 1544/5, in the form of the warden's account, was written on parchment.⁹⁸ Parchment was reserved for those documents which the guild felt confident were in their final form.

This book places individuals at its heart: if we are to understand the types of people who chose to join a fraternity in late medieval society, it is natural that prosopography is central. Issues of course arise when attempting to discern such details from any pre-modern source, and here we are faced with the uneven survival of all classes of guild documents, as well as the uncertainties inherent in attempting to identify and cross-reference individuals from a list of names (however detailed that list might be) with other sources created for an entirely different set of circumstances and with an entirely different purpose. This issue is neatly illustrated by one example: three servants of Thomas Smyth of Bristol joined the Palmers in 1501/2.⁹⁹ Could their master be the same Thomas Smyth who joined the Palmers two years later, with his wife Margaret, and who resided in the parish of St. Nicholas, Bristol?¹⁰⁰ Corroborating evidence would be required to confirm this supposition, and so any conclusions of this nature presented in this study err on the side of caution and only those of which we can be reasonably certain have been pursued.

This methodological challenge is primarily overcome through intense record-linkage work across manorial, lordship, civic, ecclesiastical and central government records alongside guild records. The array of membership records produced by and for the guild are put to use productively to uncover and reconstruct the social forces at work in the later Middle Ages, supplemented with information drawn from other archival sources. The guild records delineate interpersonal, familial and economic relationships, allowing connections to be drawn between individuals, whether they enrolled at the same time or on different occasions. From this, pressures motivating enrolment may be inferred and used as an explanatory model of how guild membership spread through late medieval society. Social groupings are identified, for instance by occupation, neighbourhood or household. Sometimes this information provides a view of the social make-up of the guild, but at others it can also be identified as another force that

caused men and women to join the guild. If used alone, these sources would paint an uneven picture of the guild's intersection with society and so individuals have been identified from non-guild records, extracting further details of their lives and experiences in order for the circumstances of their membership to be placed in a wider context. Together, the dual approach used here is significant: it permits a new interpretation of how guild membership was conceptualised and the meanings that were attached to it, changing the way we think about medieval communities, domesticity and politics, as well as governmental bodies and religious houses, and more ephemeral concepts such as the urban *cursus honorum*. The significance is particularly striking in an examination of the relationship between the Palmers' Guild and the Council of the Marches (for which limited documentary evidence survives in comparison with other governmental bodies in the Tudor period), as the guild records reveal how the Palmers integrated themselves into the region's society through their associations with this local offshoot of royal authority. Here, the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow acts as a window into medieval and Tudor society, politics and international relations.

This study contends that national guild membership was pervasive and important in late medieval Wales and England. The meanings attached to membership were varied and flexible, assigned by localised groups of members as suited their specific needs and circumstances. Due to this conceptual malleability, membership of the guild could, for instance, be employed as a local benchmark of the suitability of an individual for involvement in urban and rural governance. Yet alongside this, the Palmers' Guild never became an exclusive organisation and instead inducted individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds. Throughout, the actions of individuals and the institution of the Palmers are studied in conjunction, illuminating the nuances and tensions inherent in the working relationship between a corporate body and its members.

While the draw of spiritual provision and sociability as an explanatory factor for the membership of medieval guilds should not be overlooked, this book approaches the study of guild membership through an examination of issues of motivation and intention (as far as can be ascertained) among different groups. The first chapter considers exactly what it meant to be actively involved in the Palmers' Guild. The size of the Palmers' membership, moreover, presents an opportunity to study both those geographically proximate to the guild and those physically far removed. What measures, if any, did the guild take to ensure that a community of brethren existed in locations far from Ludlow? How did individual men and women take advantage of guild networks and foster social relations amongst themselves? The chapter ultimately addresses the question that

hangs over any study of a regional, or national, institution: to what extent did membership manifest itself in the everyday lives of brethren?

Building on this foundation, the second chapter focuses on the different manifestations and mutations of membership by individuals through the lens of domesticity, politics and regionality, identifying the prevalence of guild membership among noble, gentle and mercantile households. This is a multilayered topic, which brings together themes of domesticity, service, affective relationships and retainer networks alongside guild studies. Four patterns are broadly identified to explain the trends found amongst the Palmers' brethren: the life cycle of the servant, the internal influences within a household, external pressures and, finally, the resulting benefits of household membership. The sum total of this analysis accounts for the deep social currents, specific to households, that manifested in the large-scale presence of masters, families and servants among the Palmers' membership lists.

The following two chapters turn towards the intersection of a national guild with urban and regional politics. [Chapter 3](#) extends a well-trodden topic of research surrounding guilds – the relationship between local civic politics and guilds – but turns this on its head to consider the relationship between the Palmers and local power structures *outside* of Ludlow. Using Worcester, Gloucester, Coventry, Bristol and Shrewsbury as five main case studies, augmented by a discussion of Reading and London, it argues that the Palmers' Guild could be a proving ground for aspiring members of the provincial urban elite, generally attracting men at an early stage of their political careers. Grounded in ideas of 'civic Catholicism', the role of the Palmers in urban politics was limited to the regional centres of the Midlands, Welsh Marches and the south-west of England – Reading and London are shown to present a different picture. Moving to wider governance structures, the fourth chapter is inspired by historical studies of county community and politics. Why were so many men involved in governance at a county level also members of the Palmers? By exploring the membership patterns, geographical spread, and career progression of this group, it is clear that the integration of the Palmers' Guild with the regional royal governance of the Council of the Marches in the late fifteenth century served to enhance the political benefits of membership. This discussion is then inverted in the final chapter to consider the role of pre-existing networks in enhancing a national guild to one with an international presence. Following the guild's journey to Rome and Tournai in the early sixteenth century, in the wake of Henry VIII's short-lived invasion and occupation of the French city and the guild's attempts to secure an indulgence, it argues that the universality of fraternities both transcended and was shaped by geo-political borders.

Notes

1. For the best analysis of the imagery in St John's chapel, focusing primarily on the eastern window and, to a lesser extent, on the carved reredos, see Christian Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild Window, St. Lawrence's Church, Ludlow: A Study of the Construction of Guild Identity in Medieval Stained Glass', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 72 (1997), 26–37.
2. For accounts of the building work, see Michael Faraday, *Ludlow 1085–1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), 54; Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild Window', 26; John Newman and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Shropshire* (New Haven and London, 2006), 354–61; David Lloyd, Margaret Clark and Chris Potter, *St Laurence's Church, Ludlow: The Parish Church and People, 1199–2009* (Almeley, 2010), 39–43.
3. As argued by Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild Window'.
4. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden legend, or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, vol. 6, ed. Frederick Startridge Ellis (London, 1935), 26–8. The potency of this legend, with its royal and divine connections, is evinced by its inclusion in the antiquarian John Leland's *Itinerary* in the sixteenth century. Lucy Toulmin Smith, ed., *The Itinerary of John Leland In or About the Years 1535–1543*, vol. 2 (Carbondale, 1964), 76.
5. Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33, no. 4 (October 1994), 445.
6. Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild Window', 27.
7. SA: LB/5/3/28.
8. Only '*fenestram fieri fecerunt*' remains, but see Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild Window', 27.
9. The contract commissioning the reredos made between the guild's warden and Robert Watkynson of Lilleshall, carver, is preserved among the guild's records. SA: LB/5/5/3. See the discussion and conjectural plan of the reredos, in addition to a transcription of the contract, in Liddy, 'The Palmers' Guild Window', 33–5.
10. For belonging to a guild to set oneself apart, and their exclusivity, see: Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, 2005), 152–3; Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c. 1350–1558* (Woodbridge, 1996), 137; Gervase Rosser, *Medieval Westminster, 1200–1540* (Oxford, 1989), 287; Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c.1470–1550* (Woodbridge, 2001), 131.
11. Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250–1550* (Oxford, 2015).
12. For this suggestion see Faraday, *Ludlow*, 91.
13. Faraday, *Ludlow*, 91–3.
14. For a brief overview of the functions of late medieval guilds and their place within the Church hierarchy, see Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, 2–7.
15. Rosser, 'Going to a Fraternity Feast', 431.
16. Derek Keene, 'English Urban Guilds c.900–1300: The Purposes and Politics of Association', in *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900–1900*, ed. Ian A. Gadd and Patrick Wallis (London, 2006), 3, 9–10.
17. For example, in 1493, the stewards paid the guild priests 24s 4d for diverse obits. Obits were still being performed in 1532, although the system for recording payments

had changed, breaking down the expenses, recording 2s 5d for 'offeryng of obittes' and specific obits, like 20s for John Hosyer's obit. SA: LB/5/3/53; LB/5/3/30. The money collected from lands endowed for obits is found in the renter's accounts, like the collection of 14s 6d for Geoffrey Baugh's obit in 1533/4: SA: LB/5/3/61.

18. For examples of payment to the guild's bellman, see SA: LB/5/3/58, m. 3; LB/5/3/9, m. 3. The priests fluctuated in number: the guild rental accounts of 1284 suggest there were four. In 1349, there were seven and then only four in 1364 and 1377. In the 1530s, the guild's expenses note that there were nine. They resided in a college in the churchyard. SA: LB/5/3/61.

19. SA: LB/5/3/59, m. 4.

20. A. Hamilton Thompson, 'Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries, Under the Acts of 37 Henry VIII, Cap. IV., and I Edward VI., Cap. XIV', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, Ser. 3, 10 (1910), 355–7.

21. This varied each year but was usually around one mark. For examples, see SA: LB/5/3/56, m. 2; LB/5/3/58, m. 3; LB/5/3/59, m. 3.

22. For further discussion on the construction of the church in the fifteenth century, see Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2017), 59–60.

23. M.J. Angold et al., 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2, ed. A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh (London, 1973), 134–40.

24. For example, in several instances in SA: LB/5/3/61. These are a compilation of unpaginated loose receipts of the early sixteenth century.

25. Faraday, *Ludlow*, 93.

26. For example, see the receipts for membership contained in SA: LB/5/3/23.

27. This number has been determined by recording the name of every individual who contributed towards a membership fee from the following sources. SA: LB/5/3/1–10; LB/5/1/1–4; LB/5/3/13–16; LB/5/3/37–45.

28. Faraday, *Ludlow*, 88; Rachael Harkes, 'Building Success: Property Investment and Development in Ludlow', in *Fourteenth Century England*, vol. 13, ed. Gwilym Dodd and Helen Lacey (Woodbridge, 2025), 89–92.

29. As outlined in more detail in Harkes, 'Building Success', 87–105.

30. SA: LB/5/3/46; LB/5/3/23.

31. Rachael Harkes, 'Remembering the Dead: Postmortem Guild Membership in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 63, no. 2 (April 2024), 342–3.

32. The earliest examples (generally payments of 3s 4d) are in 1423–4. SA: LB 5/3/13.

33. A *debitoria* roll covering the years 1428–9, 1433–4, 1434–5, 1437–8, 1438–9, 1439–40, 1440–1 and 1442–3 generally demonstrates individual payments of 2s or 3s 4d (6s 8d for a couple), but in 1440–1 a few payments are as low as 4d. SA: LB/5/3/15.

34. It is seen most clearly in the riding book that covers 1497–1506, where portfolios of payments are written out for individuals. But the clerk's receipt book for 1472/3 contains small payments (such as 4d or 6d) from many members which suggests that paying by small instalments was well underway in the 1470s. For the riding book see SA: LB/5/3/2. For the clerk's receipt book see SA: LB/5/3/37.

35. Ben R. McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 32, no. 3 (July 1993), 214.

36. This cost remained the same throughout the guild's lifetime and applied to both women and men. There was no discounted rate for couples.

37. Sally Badham, ‘“He Loved the Guild”: The Religious Guilds Associated with St. Botolph’s Church, Boston’, in *‘The Beste and Fairest of Al Lincolnshire’: The Church of St. Botolph Boston, Lincolnshire, and Its Medieval Monuments*, BAR British Series 554, ed. Sally Badham and Paul Cockerham, (Oxford, 2012), 60; Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, 56; Charles Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), 122.
38. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 2v.
39. The only other guild discussed in secondary literature that uses a system of payments by instalments was that of St John the Baptist, Walsall. The difference there is that the guild at Walsall still expected an annual fee in addition to an entrance fee, which was normal practice for guilds in England. Robert Swanson, ‘A Medieval Staffordshire Fraternity: The Guild of St. John the Baptist, Walsall’, in *Staffordshire Histories: Essays in Honour of Michael Greenslade*, ed. Philip Morgan and Anthony David Murray Phillips (Keele, 1999), 56–9.
40. P. Everson and R. Wilson-North, ‘Fieldwork and Finds at Egerton, Wheathill’, *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 68 (1993), 65–71.
41. It is interesting that Machynlleth, as a place closely associated with Welsh independence, was continually reinforcing networks with Ludlow, which had connotations of being a centre of ‘English’ ruling but was firmly within the March of Wales. I am exploring this tension in my current research as part of ‘Mapping the March: Medieval Wales and England, c. 1282–1550’, which was selected for funding by the ERC (101054383), funded by the UKRI Horizon Guarantee scheme (EP/X027880/1), and led by Professor Helen Fulton at the University of Bristol.
42. A note on the maps: although there are four different types of membership records that survive, only the riding books have been used to plot locations. The riding books are the largest and most consistently surviving source and therefore allow a more robust and concentrated study of recruitment. It does mean that, for the most part, only areas where the guild steward *regularly* visited are noted and does not capture exceptions. For example, East Anglia was not part of the guild steward’s annual route, but the guild must have made a trip there after 1514, for thirty-five men and women enrolled in Walsingham in an undated membership receipt. It can be dated to between 1514 and 1538, as Richard Vowell, prior of Walsingham, became a member: LB/5/3/12. Finally, the maps do not capture individuals who were recorded under a broader geographical heading such as ‘The Prince’s Household’ or ‘Lancashire’.
43. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 152–3; Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, 137; Gervase Rosser, *Medieval Westminster, 1200–1540* (Oxford, 1989), 287; Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community*, 131. Caroline Barron explains parish fraternities as essentially communal chantries and argues that, during the second half of the fourteenth century, it was the ‘middling’ Londoners who contributed to guilds. Caroline M. Barron, ‘Parish Fraternities of Medieval London’, in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 1985), 13–37.
44. Richmond espoused this view, while Carpenter and Saul argue that it was not the case. Colin Richmond, ‘Religion and the Fifteenth-Century Gentleman’, in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Barrie Dobson (Gloucester, 1984), 199; Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499* (Cambridge, 1992), 242; Christine Carpenter, ‘Religion of the Gentry in the Fifteenth Century’, in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. D. Williams (Woodbridge, 1987), 63–6; Nigel Saul, *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2017), 110; Nigel Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280–1400* (Oxford, 1986), 159.

45. Badham, 'He Loved the Guild', 58.
46. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 15r.
47. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 35; LB/5/3/7, f. 35r.
48. John James Lambert, ed., *Records of the Skinners of London: Edward I to James I* (London, 1933), 83, 88, 237.
49. Carpenter, 'Town and Country', 69.
50. David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389–1547* (York, 2000), 273.
51. SA: LB/5/3/25, m. 1; LB/5/3/37, f. 6r.
52. Faraday, *Ludlow*, 12.
53. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, 282; Barbara A. Hanawalt and Ben R. McRee, 'The Guilds of *Homo Prudens* in Late Medieval England', *Continuity and Change*, 7, no. 2 (August 1992), 167.
54. When the guild referred to friars, who might be considered 'beggars', they referenced their religious status, opting to call them 'friar'. Examples of this can be found in SA LB/5/3/40, while Tasler's partial payment in the *debitoria* can be found in SA: LB/5/3/15, m. 1.
55. SA: LB/5/3/3/, f. 14r.
56. For example, Robert Hichcokes of Stratford-upon-Avon. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 67v.
57. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, 56.
58. For the former, see Robert Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007), 52, 90, 412, 441, and, for the latter, Elizabeth A. New, ed. *Records of the Jesus Guild in St Paul's Cathedral, c. 1450–1550: An Edition of Oxford, Bodleian MS Tanner 221, and Associated Material*, London Record Society, vol. 56. (Woodbridge, 2022).
59. See Chapter 5.
60. This focus on religious action of guilds was not done in order to construct a picture of a homogenous pious community, as Ken Farnhill makes clear: Ken Farnhill, 'Guilds, Purgatory, and the Cult of the Saints: Westlake Reconsidered' in *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy*, ed. Simon Ditchfield (Aldershot, 2001), 59–71.
61. David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389–1547* (York, 2000); Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*; Farnhill; 'Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints', 59–71; Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community*; Joanna Mattingly, 'Medieval Parish Guilds of Cornwall', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, 10, no. 3 (1989), 290–329. See also *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900–1900*, ed. Ian A. Gadd and Patrick Wallis (London, 2006).
62. Claire Kennan, 'Guilds and Society in Louth, Lincolnshire, c. 1450–1550' (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2018).
63. Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 67, no. 1 (January 1992), 69–97; Hanawalt and McRee, 'The Guilds of *Homo Prudens*', 163–79; McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', 195–225.
64. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, 7.
65. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*.
66. Faraday, *Ludlow*, 91.

67. Harkes, 'Building Success', 87–105.
68. They can also be used to construct a linear history of the Palmers' Guild, which has been done in Michael Faraday, ed., *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild* (2012), xv–xvii.
69. For example, see SA: LB/5/3/56, m. 2.
70. For example, they paid the bailiffs of Ludlow 19s 3d ob. and the Priory of Wenlock 6s 8d in 1502. SA: LB/5/3/60, m. 4.
71. SA: LB/5/3/13–16.
72. SA: LB/5/3/2–10.
73. It must be noted that the current state of riding books is such that some have folios from other riding books added in and so checking the top of each folio for the correct year (rather than the title page of the manuscript) is of vital importance. It also means that the numbers written on the top of each folio (by a later hand) are incorrect, with doubling of, for example, folio '1'. The folio numbers that are provided throughout are the true folio numbers and so may not align with the numbers written on each folio.
74. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 53r.
75. These descriptors were usually written in English. For examples see SA: LB/5/3/5, ff. 22r, 67v, 76r.
76. SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 23v; LB/5/3/2, f. 36v; LB/5/3/9, f. 19r.
77. For an Oxford example, see the entry of John Stevyns of Oriel College, SA: LB/5/3/40. An example from Warwick can be found in SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 24r.
78. Multiple examples of this can be found throughout the riding books but these specific examples can be found in SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 9v and LB/5/3/6, f. 54v.
79. SA: LB/5/3/40.
80. SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 22v.
81. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 5v.
82. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 133v.
83. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 133v.
84. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 53v; SA: LB/5/3/40.
85. SA: LB/5/3/1–4.
86. For his entry in the riding book, see SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 38r. For his name in the register, see SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 6.
87. Robert Swanson, 'Books of Brotherhood: Registering Fraternity and Confraternity in Late Medieval England', in *The Durham Liber Vitae and its Context*, ed. David Rollason, Alan J. Piper, Margaret Harvey and Lynda Rollason (Woodbridge, 2004), 237.
88. For example, SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 75v.
89. SA: LB/5/3/40. The largest folios are approximately 14.5 × 23 cm. I am grateful to Kerry Evans, archivist at Shropshire Archives, for providing me with these measurements.
90. For example, see the size difference of folios 70–75 compared to the folios on bookending them. SA: LB/5/3/40.
91. See SA: LB/5/3/40.
92. For example, SA: LB/5/3/40, ff. 32–7. For the entry of William ap Madoc and Gwenllïan ferch Dafydd see f. 69v.

93. The most complete surviving riding book is SA: LB/5/3/7, which contains eighty-two folios recording new recruits in 1505/6. The stewards had a regular collection route by the early sixteenth century (which is reflected in LB/5/3/7).
94. They are similar but not identical to the twinned watermarks found in the Gravell Watermark Index, HND.104.1 and HND.105.1: <https://memoryofpaper.eu/gravell/record.php?&action=GET&RECID=2193>.
95. For example, SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 48; LB/5/3/29, f. 8.
96. SA: LB/5/3/19.
97. SA: LB/5/3/32.
98. SA: LB/5/3/34.
99. SA: LB/5/3/3, ff. 50v, 51r.
100. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 55r.

Chapter 1

Microcosms of membership

The Palmers' Guild was based in Ludlow, a market town nestled in the mid-Welsh Marches, yet most of its members lived well beyond the town walls and so experienced a particular phenomenon – that of joining a national fraternity rather than a local guild. Gervase Rosser described 'the essence of guild membership' as a conscious decision of each participant to *choose* to engage with each other: it was not simply geographical proximity that brought people together, but the decision of individuals to actively build the solidarity that characterised medieval fraternities.¹ We should ask, then, how and whether active personal commitment was possible in a fraternity with national reach. Were members involved (in any real sense) in the guild beyond the payment of their annual dues? Did opportunities for involvement in the Palmers present themselves outside of Ludlow, and, if so, in what ways? Focusing on how individuals chose to engage with a guild arguably captures the vitality of fraternities and prompts a fresh consideration of institutions that can all too quickly be reduced to historical timelines and understood only as avenues to achieve political and economic success. While such aims certainly *could* be attained by joining the Palmers (as will be shown in subsequent chapters), this was only one aspect of guild membership, and focusing on it alone would severely limit our understanding of the vitality of these organisations in late medieval society. The individuals within any guild were the reason for its strength, embodied in the contributions of both the governing members of a guild and those who comprised the body of membership. This chapter examines the individual and group experience of these extramural members to argue that the extraordinary nature of the community of the Palmers, with members

scattered far and wide from the 'home base' of Ludlow, did not prevent interaction with the guild or with fellow brethren. Varied and genuine opportunities to support those within the guild, to bolster the collective coffers, and to contribute to the liturgical and social elements of the fraternity were ever-present in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The idea of belonging and community was not confined to the town in which a guild was founded or from which it operated.

Members, while living at some distance from Ludlow, actively took advantage of the social and religious opportunities afforded to them by their membership. The reach of the guild did not preclude what might be termed an 'active relationship' on the part of its members. Bequests to, and financial support for, a guild are the most obvious starting point to analyse levels of involvement, which naturally addresses questions surrounding the individual initiative of guild members. Such initiative, however, did not exist in a vacuum. It was encouraged by the governing men of the guild and by the policies that were pursued. We must, therefore, consider in tandem the roles of the guild and of guild members in order to determine the level and nature of participation, and the reasons for their involvement, by those not resident in Ludlow. Brethren from Ludlow are, to some extent, in a different category and mostly excluded from the discussion here.² The extant sources permit a study of the establishment and maintenance of the expression of guild solidarity in the first half of the sixteenth century, specifically between 1497 and 1545. It was the mutual responsibility of the guild officials and the wider membership to create a fraternity. This collaboration was present in the Palmers, defying obstacles of separation and distance.

This chapter will begin by addressing a basic question: at what point did someone who initiated payments to the guild actually become a member? The complex system of annual rides and payments outlined in the Introduction means that this is a more pertinent question than might first appear. This sets the scene for the discussion of active involvement that follows, starting with an interrogation of the Palmers' infrastructure, which allowed it to develop a complex and multilayered national presence. The second section considers how the guild and its officers consciously increased visibility in the localities and subsequently generated more direct contact with its members when compared to other wide-reaching fraternities. The guild's administrative operations offer an insight into the *opportunities* to develop personal commitment to a fraternity located far away from a member's residence. The simple collection of guild dues led to a system of officers 'in the field' who were armed with a rigorous tabulation and knowledge of their members. With over one thousand recruits each year during the first half of the sixteenth century,

the guild officials were compelled to maintain detailed records of their members to keep their accounts in order. The steward's annual rides acted as a visible reminder of the guild and were a key component in the relationship between each member and the distant institution of the guild. The third section argues that the establishment of guild representatives in towns – primarily across the Midlands – worked as a secondary, and more permanent, embodiment of the Palmers. An environment was therefore created in which members were confronted with the guild on a regular basis. But how far did members take it upon themselves to utilise that relationship and those formed between fellow members? The fourth section analyses gifts given to the guild, in both movable and immovable goods, as an expression of voluntary support of the Palmers, while the fifth section demonstrates how each village, town or city housed their own microcosm of the guild. A study of the gifts of property to the Palmers in Richards Castle (Shropshire), Eastham (Worcestershire) and Marlborough (Wiltshire) reveals brethren working together, and in turn creating a situation in which guild officials became ever further present through their responsibilities as landlords. As the guild became a landlord in multiple locations, it became more visible, sending men to repair properties and employing locals to assist in the administration of new properties. The forging of relationships between the Palmers and inhabitants of the locations in which it held property is the focus of the final section.

Member or not?

Partial payments made by an individual over several years clearly demonstrate some level of investment in the guild, and incomplete membership fees should not preclude a consideration of those who did not fulfil this financial obligation and pay the full 6s 8d. In attempting to understand membership, therefore, it is necessary to consider all those individuals who are entered in these membership accounts. The payment-by instalment system adopted by the guild in the fifteenth century allowed individuals to take upwards of twenty years to pay their full fee. This, of course, raises a question: did the initiation of payments confer membership status? The answer is not as simple as 'yes' or 'no'. Individuals became members, in part, as soon as they began to pay for their membership fee. Two types of evidence support this supposition: social and administrative.

The social benefits attached to membership, for example partaking in the breaking of bread with fellow brothers and sisters (at the feast and in

the localities, as will be discussed in the section ‘Building solidarity’) and establishing and utilising social networks formed among guild members, were elements that did not require the completion of payments.³ The guild stewards routinely presented drink and cash to religious houses that had resident regular clergy who were engaged in the process of paying their individual guild fees.⁴ In the eyes of the administration of the guild (which paid for, and organised, such victuals) and in the eyes of fellow brethren, forming relationships – friendship, even, to adopt Gervase Rosser’s terminology – was a worthwhile endeavour that could be realised after an individual had taken the first step of fiscal investment in the fraternity.⁵ This mindset was most clearly embodied in the guild’s recruitment of the officers known as solesters (more on whom in the section ‘Solesters’), who assumed their office before completing payments – a clear indication that a degree of brethren status was initiated, in the eyes of the guild officers, when the process of payment began.⁶

Further administrative practices offer evidence that individuals in the process of paying their fees were indeed considered to be members in some sense. As discussed in the Introduction, once an individual had completed their payments, their name was written on the ‘Register of Admission’, which was used by guild priests as a guide to whom they should pray for. The names therein recorded were not listed under the date of their final payment – the date at which they became a ‘full’ member – but instead for the year that they began payment, which could be up to twenty years previous. This suggests a tacit recognition on the part of the Palmers that engagement with the guild might substantially pre-date the final payment.

But, if these registers did operate as bede rolls, being read aloud to commend the souls of members to God, then it appears that this aspect of the guild’s activities, the provision of prayers for members’ soul, however, did require full payment. Although this may well have acted as an incentive for members to complete the payment of their membership fee, the fact that many did not hints at the existence of varied reasons for initiating payment. An indulgence obtained by the guild in the sixteenth century (discussed in [Chapter 5](#)) may have spurred some additional membership, but this seems unlikely: the spiritual benefits attached to the indulgence were obtained by those who visited the guild chapel, not simply those who joined the guild.⁷ It also required journeying to Ludlow, which a number of Palmers may have done, but a large number may not have; the guild’s devolved system of recruitment, collection of fees and organised social activities was one of convenience for its far-flung members and did not exactly encourage individuals to journey to Ludlow.

Building solidarity

The Palmers' Guild deployed a range of strategies to build an infrastructure that gave weight to the bonds between members and Ludlow, and between members themselves. Substantial sums of money were expended on recruiting members across Wales and England (and beyond) but over and above that, the guild spent money on bringing local groups of brethren together over food and drink. This section examines the importance of guild officers and the financial investment of the guild in creating microcosms of membership.

Large guilds deployed two methods for administering their widespread membership: using their own officers to collect fees or farming the right of collection of fees to individuals. Fee-farming for large guilds was a common practice in late medieval England. The Jesus Guild, based in London's St Paul's Cathedral, operated a system in which the collection of fees was farmed out to proctors across the country, each active in certain dioceses.⁸ Farming could become highly complex as farms became subleased to other individuals. Inevitably, this practice led to litigation, as when Nicholas Smith sued William Kynston for 7s due for the collections at Lenton (Nottinghamshire) for the Jesus Guild.⁹ In the case of the guild of St Mary, Boston, a combined method brought in membership fees. Guild chamberlains, similar to the Palmers' stewards, were allocated areas of the country from which to collect fees. Unlike the Palmers, however, the collection of fees was delegated even further through the role of the vice-chamberlain, who was given a more specific area, within a chamberlain's oversight, to collect money. It has, however, been noted that this structure was similar to fee-farming, like that of the Jesus Guild.¹⁰ The full-blown process of fee-farming, as manifested in the Jesus Guild, or the partial process chosen by the Boston guild, resulted in the individual guild member interacting with an associate of the guild but not with the main governing structure.

The Palmers' stewards, on the other hand, were members of the governing council and were directly involved in both the administration and governance of the guild.¹¹ Each Palmer possessed an unmediated relationship to the guild through their contact with one of the stewards on their annual journeys throughout the country. Direct links between members and guild officers almost certainly created the potential for interpersonal relationships in the Palmers' Guild. The retention of control over guild fees, and the money spent on the stewards' necessary expenses on journeys to collect them, communicate a sense of the guild's investment in its members. Creating microcosms of the guild across Wales and England was expensive, as well as a being a significant undertaking by the guild's

officers: each steward spent anywhere from 75 to 163 days a year traveling.¹² Each steward was allocated 14d per day for expenses on the road, and so in 1538/9, the two stewards were reimbursed £12 7s 4d (excluding their fee for holding the post).¹³ Further expenses arose. In 1519/20, the warden was given £5 for his journey to Walsingham (Norfolk), when he recruited brethren from the abbey there, as well as more broadly from East Anglia.¹⁴ Significant financial outlay such as this gives weight to the importance the guild placed in curating an active community of members.

In addition to their role as collectors of money owed to the guild, the stewards took the opportunity on their journeys to spend money in the localities on members. Each year, when the steward arrived in villages, towns or cities, he diverted guild funds towards brethren. These expenses in the clerk's receipt books are interspersed among the recording of the collection of fees from the stewards' journeys. The lack of detail precludes definitive understanding of the nature of the dispersal of money by the stewards; the guild's accounts were created for its own use, to balance the books, not for the historian seeking precise information.¹⁵ Yet what is possible to ascertain is that the steward disbursed funds on gathering new and existing brethren together over food and drink. While never explicitly stated in the guild documents that the stewards were expected to do this, the responsibility can be discerned from receipts, partial bills and formal accounts. The frequent use of the blanket term of 'brethren' by the stewards on their rides suggests a communal aspect. One entry in the clerk's receipt book records that the steward spent 3d on a quart of Romney wine for the brethren of Oswestry.¹⁶ Members in other locations were brought together over food paid for by the steward, which is discussed in more detail in the next section.¹⁷ The stewards rarely specified the names of individual brethren, or even how many brethren they met with. We know, however, that the stewards did spend money on certain members and they occasionally specified it in their accounts. Diane, the wife of the dyer Richard Wymfold of Alcester, received 6d from the steward Walter Rogers (with no recorded cause); the rector of Lindridge (Worcestershire) was given half a gallon of wine; an interaction with the archdeacon of Lichfield set the guild steward back 6d; in addition to 8d for Master Treford of Oswestry and Master Baker (described simply as 'of Dorsetshire').¹⁸ Such a meeting of brethren and guild officers was an indication that membership, for those outside of Ludlow parish, was not simply a transactional relationship of the payment of money in return for prayers.

In total, the amount spent each year was comparable to that claimed by stewards for their expenses on the road: in 1538/9, the stewards, as mentioned, spent over £12 to which was added a further expense of

£9 12s 9d – the latter solely expended on brethren.¹⁹ Broken down, only small amounts were spent at each location: in the receipt book for membership fees from 1501, the steward paid 4d for the brethren of Shrewsbury and 4d for unspecified brethren.²⁰ Between 1511 and 1520, the stewards spent money on brethren in Shrewsbury, Coventry, Birmingham, Hereford, Leominster, Bristol, Worcester, Bath, Brecon, Chester, Oswestry and, on many occasions, unspecified 'dyvers brethren'.²¹ There may well have been members in other locations that accounted for a steward's costs: a number of scribbles in the clerk's receipt book speak of the steward's expenses on brethren 'as it apperet in a byll'.²² Certainly by the 1530s, the stewards were incurring this kind of outlay in every location in which they stopped. In 1538/9, William Phelypps' accounts noted expenses on brethren in each of the places on his circuits: Thornbury, Bath, Bristol, Westbury, Keynsham, Wells, Glastonbury, Burton, Reading, Shaftesbury, Salisbury, Amesbury, Wherwell, Marlborough, Marshfield, Painswick, Bishops Cleeve, Cirencester, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Pershore, Evesham, Worcester, Hanley and Bodenham. His counterpart, Richard Hoore, meanwhile, took the remainder of England and the entirety of Wales and likewise accounted for expenses on brethren there.²³ The steward's arrival into a town therefore heralded meeting of brethren. The social aspect of a guild – the community, the networks available – materialised in the localities, on a more or less formal basis, each time the guild official arrived. The gathering of brethren over food and drink was, therefore, a vital component in the creation, and maintenance, of an active guild community. Justification for the payments is distinctly absent throughout the accounts: they were evidently commonplace, a routine activity that the guild council expected to spend on members.

In comparison to itinerant meetings of brethren, regular feasts were held each year in Ludlow itself. Wine was brought in from Bristol, pepper imported, and breads, ales, fish and meats sourced more locally, and actors provided entertainment for the attending brethren.²⁴ The feast at Pentecost was the primary celebration and its importance is reflected in the expenses paid for the guild in preparation each year: in 1377/8, over £5 was expended.²⁵ The absence of records detailing those who attended the main guild feast at Pentecost prevents us from knowing the scope of attendance, in terms of both the geographical catchment of those present and the numbers of people involved. There is no record of fines for absence, nor specific travel costs for the invitation of members from the localities, as found in Stratford where the Holy Cross guild paid for its officers to go to Warwick, specifically with the intent to invite its brethren there to the feast.²⁶ Those who did not attend the feast (and the Mass that preceded it) would incur a fine, suggesting that the regular formal assembly of

brethren, and the community it fostered, was a noticeable priority of the Holy Cross guild and it was not alone in this approach.²⁷ The key explanatory difference between the two guilds may be the type of membership. Unlike the Palmers, the Stratford guild had mostly 'short-range contacts' who resided within fifteen miles of the town.²⁸ Is it realistic to assume that Ludlow's members in distant counties, such as Cornwall, Sussex, Norfolk and Yorkshire, attended the Pentecostal feast every year? It is highly improbable and, moreover, the guildhall was not suitably sized to accommodate thousands of members.²⁹ A smaller gathering from the Midlands, the Cotswolds and the Marches was more likely to have made up the core of attendance each Pentecost.

Yet the Palmers embraced the prevailing guild ideology of solidarity in spite of its extensive national reach. Guild feasts may have been the most common way to forge relationships between members in other organisations. Indeed, they were 'tangible expression[s]' of the companionship commensurate with guild membership;³⁰ but the Palmers facilitated solidarity in other ways. In the towns which the stewards visited, their arrival activated the collective bodies of local Palmers. The meeting of brethren with the stewards was another opportunity (after the feast) for members to gather together. Because of the guild's practice of annual rides to collect fees, rather than collecting at the annual feast as was the case with many guilds, members in each town could meet under the auspices of the guild more regularly than the Pentecostal feast.

In addition, there was sporadic fostering of support and solidarity undertaken by the guild on their brethren *outside* of the routine of annual fee collection as evinced by payments recorded separately from the accounting of the steward for his normal expenses on brethren while collecting.³¹ On two occasions in 1511, the stewards Thomas Clonton and Walter Rogers spent money on 'men' of Shrewsbury, in addition to a separate meeting with the 'brethren' of Shrewsbury.³² The use of different terms to note who the guild was spending money on is significant. 'Men' might refer to potential members that the guild wanted to recruit, or to important men within the city that they wished to forge links with. The lack of any names of these 'men' thwarts any attempt to tease out more precise significance of this word choice. Elsewhere, however, the guild's officers were slightly more specific in noting the recipients of their financial outlay. In July 1534, the accounts note payments to brethren in Denbigh, Carmarthen and Monmouth; the brethren of Tenbury Wells (Worcestershire) and Eardisley (Herefordshire) were also the focus of guild spending in the following month.³³ In December, two guild officers spent 9d on Cardiff brethren, before three officers then spent 12d on the bailiff and the brethren of Brecon in the same month.³⁴

The stewards' visit and the disbursal of money not only fostered a sense of community among brethren in towns, where members came from a varying selection of crafts, trades and social statuses, but were also practices that extended into clerical and monastic spheres. In 1511, the steward Thomas Clonton spent 4s 9d on the priory of Ranton (Staffordshire), the priests of Battlefield (Shropshire), and an unspecified priest who brought in a 'nobull . . . as it apperith in a byll', while his counterpart, the steward Walter Rogers, spent 10d on the canonesses of White Ladies (Shropshire) and purchased a gallon of wine to give the priory at Worcester in the same year.³⁵ Twenty years later, Thomas Whelar accounted for guild expenses on the college of priests in Ruthin (Denbighshire) in 1533/4.³⁶ These religious communities were already arenas of solidarity between members, and indeed households, whether regular or secular in nature, were important microcosms of the Palmers in the localities.³⁷ While the commitment of each member was reconfirmed each year with the payment of membership fees, the gathering on the steward's arrival operated in much the same way. The steward, in his wide-ranging and varied role, as a member of the guild council *and* as an itinerant official, was a key figure in connecting centre and locality. The Palmers were geographically dispersed yet also concentrated in particular towns. In this way, guild membership could still stimulate and enact the performance of community. Members did not need to travel to Ludlow to participate actively in the Palmers' communal life.

Solesters

Stewards were not the only guild officials to represent guild interests further afield than Ludlow. Similar to the Ludlow-based officers, 'solesters' were officers of the guild but were resident in locations across Wales and England. The exact purpose of the solesters is not outlined in any surviving documentation but the definition and etymology of the word points towards their role. Solester is a form of the Middle English word 'solicitor' (solister, solester), defined as either an 'instigator' or an 'agent, representative'.³⁸ These officials, then, were either placed to encourage (or 'instigate') membership and/or to act as the guild's representative in their respective locations. Upon closer inspection, however, the solesters were at the very heart of the Palmers' infrastructure for their members, supporting membership and fostering a sense of community.

The first mention of solesters operating on behalf of the Palmers is found in 1504, and their office was still in existence in the 1540s.³⁹ While it is entirely possible that the role was created by the guild in the fourteenth

and fifteenth centuries, their first appearance in the early sixteenth suggests that solesters were a product of the sudden and dramatic increase in membership during the last years of the fifteenth century, coinciding with (and perhaps prompted by) the arrival of Prince Arthur and the Council of the Marches in Ludlow.⁴⁰ The solesters were partially responsible for handling the financial side of membership. When members opted to pay their fee with goods (such as fish, chicken and brass), rather than coin, solesters arranged the carriage of those goods from their respective locations to Ludlow.⁴¹ While it has been suggested previously that solesters collected guild fees and thereby reduced the number of villages around Ludlow that the stewards had to include on their collection routes, the guild's records make it clear that stewards nevertheless visited towns in which the solesters resided.⁴² They paid the solester a nominal fee, usually between 2d and 4d, and purchased food for each solester while simultaneously meeting with brethren of the guild.⁴³ The stewards spent a number of days in each place; for example, Richard Hore spent three days in Leicester and four days in Derby meeting with brethren and solesters.⁴⁴ The existence of solesters did not negate the need for the stewards to visit those towns, nor did it appear to shorten the length of time there. In Nottingham, where there is no surviving evidence of a solester, Hore likewise tarried three days, collecting fees and spending money on members.

The solesters were, more importantly, part of the process of building a community of the guild that stretched across the expanse of Wales and England. Although solesters' locations can be established only through a few surviving sources, a sense of the scale of the Palmers' permanent presence is clear. In the 1530s, Richard Hore paid for the meat and drink for solesters in Birmingham, Coleshill, Atherstone, Nuneaton, Derby, Burton, Leicester and Coventry.⁴⁵ The accounts from 1534 record payments to Marcher solesters in Kingsland, Hanley, Yarpole, Worfield, Tenby, Oswestry, Ombersley, Martley, Claverley, Holt and Wigmore.⁴⁶ The heartland of the guild's membership was the West Midlands, and solesters were present among the towns and cities that joined the Palmers in force. Yet solesters were still appointed in rural locations of Yarpole, Wigmore (both in Herefordshire), Ombersley and Martley (both in Worcestershire), who were small contributors to the Palmers' membership: only thirty-one members joined from those four manors between 1497 and 1515.⁴⁷ Coventry, Birmingham, Derby, Burton and Leicester, on the other hand, were hives of membership. Coventry was the city with the highest contribution to membership in 1505/6.⁴⁸ The size of the village, town or city, and the number of paying members does not appear to have had any bearing on the decision of the guild to employ a solester there.⁴⁹ Just like their

membership, the Palmers employed solesters across England and Wales and they could be found across Gloucestershire, Suffolk and North Wales.⁵⁰ There was a clear commitment to establish infrastructure to support their members in each location, not only the ones local to the guild's base in Ludlow.

Gathering of brethren, as discussed earlier, augmented feelings of solidarity and was therefore a key aspect in the social function of a guild. While the visitation of the steward prompted a gathering of brethren, it was still simply an annual gathering, like the Pentecostal feast. While the benefits of this localised gathering have already been discussed, the absence of a guildhall, or even an occasion to meet, was an issue the Palmers had to overcome in the localities if they were to create a sense of community. The significance of solesters, therefore, lay in their permanent presence and potential to encourage the social activity the steward would otherwise only generate each visit. Despite the somewhat obscure references in the surviving documentation, it is apparent that the solesters were the 'face' of the Ludlow Palmers for the majority of members. The guild was evidently concerned with the type of person suitable to act as their representative from afar, as it was noted that a new recruit from Suffolk in 1518 would make a 'good' solester, while the Gloucestershire solesters 'promysed to be good'.⁵¹ The Palmers sought to create and sustain a positive presence across the country, devolving the usual structures of fraternity to create microcosms of membership. The continued existence of the role into the 1540s is testament to the need for their services to cater to the extensive membership.

Although a national guild, the Palmers' actions in the sixteenth century demonstrate an attempt to consolidate the bonds of fraternal support characteristic of localised fraternities. Stewards and solesters provided a direct link to the guild as an institution and the opportunity for membership of a national fraternity to be more than a transactional and occasional relationship in return for spiritual benefits. This was not, of course, a one-way relationship. The structures put in place by the guild reveal nothing of the reciprocal investment of the brethren, raising the question of to what extent individuals far from Ludlow were demonstrating their commitment to guild membership?

Gifts

Gifts, either in the form of post-mortem bequests or lifetime donations, are a fruitful avenue by which to investigate the levels of members' engagement with the Palmers' Guild. By taking a broad approach and using a

range of surviving source material available (wills, inventories and membership records), we can look at gifts to the guild in whatever form they came in.

In 1509, John Browne bequeathed eight marks to the warden and brethren of the Palmers to make a 'salt [cellar] therwith' for their use.⁵² A Ludlow man with many pious testamentary provisions relating to the local parish church of St Laurence and the Palmers' Guild, including for a month's mind and an annual obit, both to be performed by guild priests, his bequest is characteristic of membership of a local guild. Over thirty extant wills, drawn from over the guild's lifetime, illustrate Ludlow parishioners' requests for daily Masses or annual obits to be performed by the Palmers' guild priests.⁵³ The Palmers provided an opportunity for bequests, often in return for prayers or obits, but acting upon that was optional. As ever, the voluntary aspect of guilds must be stressed.⁵⁴ Remembering a parish fraternity in one's last will and testament was a choice made by an individual benefactor and, as such, they have often been used by historians to demonstrate levels of personal investment in guilds.⁵⁵ Bequests to parish fraternities were, in one form or another, a method of commemoration within an immediate sphere and local members would be confronted on a more regular basis with divine services or donated items such as chalices and vestments.⁵⁶ These bequests served the dual purpose of providing spiritual benefits as well as acting as visible reminders of an individual's relationship with local guilds. At first glance, Ludlow members stood to gain most from visible recognition within the community through their bequests. Yet the Palmers were much more than a local parish fraternity.

The wills of seventy guild members, proven in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, were sampled from Bristol, Worcester, Gloucester, Coventry, Reading, Shrewsbury, Lincoln, Abergavenny, Aylesbury and Wiston, offering an approximate representation of areas where membership was pronounced. Only three wills mentioned the Palmers' Guild and each featured a slightly different bequest. Thomas Eyton, bailiff of Aylesbury (Buckinghamshire) bequeathed 6s 8d to the Palmers in his will of 1504.⁵⁷ While his will does not specify a purpose for this money, it was likely intended for membership as it aligns with the normal admission fee. This is confirmed, as his name appears in the 1504 riding book, which notes both that he was deceased and that his fee had been paid in full.⁵⁸ The other two wills relate to merchants of Bristol and are from the mid-fifteenth century: Thomas Aisshe (1457) and Robert Sturmy (1458). Aisshe bequeathed 20s to the Palmers in 1457 while Sturmy left a legacy to the guild priests in 1458.⁵⁹ The guild was collecting 4d of rent from 'Sturmy's grownde' in 1513 and 1514, presumably as part of Sturmy's legacy from over fifty years previous.⁶⁰

Although three testamentary bequests to the guild might not indicate much in the way of active involvement, this is perhaps more of an issue with the nature of the source base than an accurate reflection of how brethren interacted with the guild. The limitations of wills are the subject of continuing scholarly debate among historians of the later Middle Ages.⁶¹ The lack of bequests in the sample should not be taken as a complete absence of interest. Even those members for whom the Palmers were the primary parish guild – not possessing the regional or national context in which others might view it – were not a guaranteed source of bequests for the guild. Comparisons with other fraternities in other parts of England confirm this: in Louth, a mere six wills between 1450 and 1550 mention one or two of the town's major guilds.⁶² Wills are not, therefore, indicative of an individual's relationship with the guild. In general, wills alone rarely reveal membership of particular fraternities. In Cambridgeshire, Bainbridge's study of 150 wills before 1547 found that only 14 per cent mentioned guilds or fraternities.⁶³ Significant attention has been paid to mercantile bequests to guilds, which were often low as well. Only fifteen per cent of York's merchants left bequests to guilds, while Hull and Beverley guilds were even less likely to receive legacies.⁶⁴ Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire guilds were frequently overlooked by merchants in favour of deathbed contributions to their parish church.⁶⁵ The exception might lie with certain major trading centres, which tended to have a higher contribution from merchant members, as seen through fifty-four per cent of Boston's merchants bequeathing money or items to guilds, and forty-three per cent in Bishop's Lynn.⁶⁶ The Palmers, however, were not the only major guild that did not receive a substantial number of bequests from members outside of its immediate community. Even the gentry members of Stratford's guild of the Holy Cross who were active in the guild during their lifetime refrained from remembering the guild in their will.⁶⁷ Christine Carpenter's study concludes that substantial gentry families did not see the Stratford guild as a viable option for religious patronage, opting instead to endow their own chantries for remembrance.⁶⁸ We should not, therefore, take the lack of testamentary bequests to the Palmers as an indicator of either the pious inclinations of its members or the involvement of its members through gift giving.

Other sources complement our understanding of gifts to the Palmers. A *memoranda* book dating from the 1510s and 1520s contains miscellaneous information primarily relating to the guild's financial activities and obligations. Reckonings and 'acownting' happened on at least an annual basis and are recorded here. So, too, are the rent collections, expenses and obligations relating to obits, and other financial transactions of guild business. Amid repetitive pages of rental collections are a few

inventories of items ‘yn the treasour of gold’ and the ‘tresour of gages’.⁶⁹ These inventories provide a glimpse into the wealth of the guild as well as implying a sense of gifts given to the guild. Several items within the treasury certainly fall into this latter category. A red girdle ‘of the gifte of Thomas Williams’ was one such item in the treasury in the early sixteenth century. With no further information about this gift, it is hard to identify Thomas Williams. There are two men of that name in the extant records who were members contemporaneous to this inventory; one from Stamford (Lincolnshire) and the other from Lugwardine (Herefordshire).⁷⁰ The donor could be one or neither of these men. Within the accounts in the memorandum book is an item listed in a reckoning of the ‘treasure of gold’: ‘And also there ys yn a nothir litle bag of the gifte of John Brown together 5 libras vi s. viii d.’⁷¹ It is plausible that a gift of such value was from the steward John Brown (in office 1505–9), who was a wealthy draper of Ludlow. As already has been noted, Brown gave eight marks for the guild to have a salt cellar commissioned, but his will also bequeathed £10 for a tenement to be bought and given to the guild for a perpetual obit.⁷² His testamentary provisions are arresting enough, especially when compared with the lack, and low value, of other bequests to the Palmers, yet evidently they were not his only gifts to the guild. The numerous gifts by officers, both in life and after death, are indicative of investment in, and a strong attachment to, the Palmers. Brown’s fellow steward, Richard Bragott (in office 1505–9), gifted the guild items that were recorded on the same folio. Unlike Brown’s, these items are clear in their function and religious nature, being ‘abassen a yewer and a dyaburue [diaper] towel’.⁷³ Sir Hugh Cheney, a local member of the gentry and one of the guild’s elders in the fourteenth century, gifted the guild a gilt and enamelled nut cup (known as the ‘Warden’s Nut’) and a goblet with his arms engraved on the bottom.⁷⁴ John Hosier, likewise involved in the guild, gifted another nut cup in the fifteenth century.⁷⁵ Those intimate with the guild’s governance, as these men were, lavished material wealth on the Palmers in ways that are perhaps unsurprising.

The guild accounts and membership records reveal gifts from non-local members as well. Elizabeth Peke, a widow from London, gave the Palmers a tapestry that depicted the ‘story’ of the guild in lieu of payment for her membership, although the tapestry was undoubtedly more costly than the 6s 8d entry fee.⁷⁶ The ‘story’ shown on the tapestry was likely the same one that was memorialised in the fifteenth-century stained-glass window in the guild’s chapel, depicting a version of the Golden Legend where two Ludlow pilgrims feature almost as much as Edward the Confessor.⁷⁷ This tapestry continued to reinforce the identity of the guild and demonstrate the guild’s supposed ties with the English crown. Of course, not all lifetime

gifts to guilds were imbued with such significance: those given to the Jesus Guild often took the form of money.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, the majority of gifts from other members outside of Ludlow materialised in the form of plate, such as a gilt cup and cover 'of the gifte of my lady Newton of Pembroke' recorded in an inventory of the guild's treasury in 1517/18.⁷⁹ The same inventory describes another gilt cup and cover from one 'Master Bagot' of Bristol. This is almost certainly a reference to John Bagot, merchant and member of the civic elite in Bristol, who became a Palmer in 1489 with his wife, Elizabeth.⁸⁰ Charles Booth, Bishop of Hereford, had given the Palmers a gilt standing cup with a cover by 1517/18.⁸¹ Two other gifts – amounting to three spice plates in total – are recorded in the same inventory: two by the gift of one 'mistress Lane' (location unknown) and one from Sir John Bristowe of Bristol.⁸² These gifts to the Palmers were each given by members who, unlike the officers discussed earlier, were not intimately involved in running the guild and are therefore of note. They were voluntary in a different way from those of local members. For although each of these members, from Ludlow or afar, gave material goods, it is worth acknowledging the differences of their geographic locations and therefore the initiative behind the gift. The immediacy and intimacy that existed in small market towns such as Ludlow were strong enticements to donate. Yet the voluntarism of guild activity was most marked in the actions of Elizabeth Peke, Lady Newton, John Bagot, Bishop Charles Booth and Sir John Bristowe. All of these gifts were likely to have been used within the Palmers' guildhall, with the tapestry hung and the drinking and food vessels deployed at feasts. The 'Warden's Nut' was reserved for the sitting warden and the other nut cup likely for an individual that held a particular office: nut cups were primarily for individual ceremonial use, rather than the communal use of mazers and gilt cups.⁸³ Elements of the medieval nut cup tie in with the unique characteristics of the Palmers' Guild. Firstly, while the presence of a nut cup (also known as the Nut of India) was not extraordinary in medieval England, it invoked the idea of movement beyond Ludlow: the nut had travelled, like the pilgrims who had founded the guild, and like the more recent and regular travels of the guild officers too.⁸⁴ Secondly, there were known medicinal properties of nut cups, certainly in terms of the coconut's ability to purify, and it was also believed that the nut cup might be able to counteract poison.⁸⁵ One wonders if the warden or officers ever referenced another legend associated with their patron saint, John the Evangelist, who banished poison from his chalice before drinking.

Meanwhile, the gifted gilt cups and spice plates were deployed more generally at the feasts, placed either on the table or circulated during the course of the dinner.⁸⁶ Such gifts were analogous to individual bequests

to parish churches which were clearly meant to invoke presence or memory of the donor, or mazers gifted to religious houses with an implicit or explicit request that those who drank from the vessel should pray for the soul of the benefactor.⁸⁷ Alongside this remembrance, use of a donated cup was a way of 'participating' in the guild's activities for those who were absent, either from the earthly world or simply physically removed from Ludlow. Both types of absence were pertinent with a membership as widely dispersed over geography and time for the Palmers by the sixteenth century. The guild clearly took pains in recording from whom such gifts originated, an act of remembrance in and of itself, but also an action that highlights recollection of the donor. This theme of remembrance through objects is further underlined by the form of the proceedings of guild feasts – the lighting of candles, praying for the souls of members and partaking in acts of eating and drinking – all of which Gervase Rosser has described as 'paraliturgical' as they invoked elements of the Mass.⁸⁸ The Palmers' feasts blurring of materiality, commemoration and feasting had biblical precedents, echoing Christ's admonitions at the Last Supper and the very institution of the Eucharist: 'this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me'; and 'this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:24–5).⁸⁹ In the Mass itself, the body and blood of Christ were physically manifest as participants were urged to remember Christ's sacrifice, just as the presence of benefactors was invoked through the use of their bequests: there was no mistaking the liturgical parallels invoked in the circulation of wine in a common drinking cup during the feast.⁹⁰ These bequests, particularly those of gilt cups used communally, serve as stark reminders that the Palmers' Guild was not simply the recipient of the membership fees but an organisation in which individuals wholeheartedly engaged.

The scope of gift giving to the guild was no doubt larger than the few examples previously offered, partly due to the patchy survival of guild documents, but also due to the type of sources that survive. The working nature of these documents results in somewhat obscure references, and our modern reading of the text does not always pick up on the nuances apparent to the guild officers. These accounts were written for the warden and stewards, whose roles necessitated an intimate knowledge of the guild's inner working and every activity, and, as such, explanatory and exhaustively descriptive lists were not always necessary. Any description provided is clearly for identification purposes only, when two or more similar items are in possession of the guild. One such issue arises from the language used by the scribes writing these memoranda. The items in the treasury are, with some regularity, described as 'of' someone. Does this vocabulary denote that the item was a gift? Or was it, in fact, being held

there as a pledge, as the term ‘gages’ implies? When Roger Robyns was in debt to the Jesus Guild (St Paul’s, London) for £7, he gave four goblets, a salt cellar with cover, and a standing mazer as a pledge.⁹¹ But it is also possible that the guild chest was used as a safe deposit for its members, for some guilds already acted in the manner of a banking institution with frequent loans to their members.⁹² But equally the descriptions could also denote the gift of these items to the guild from the individuals mentioned within the inventory. For example, inventories list:

a demysent of Richard Tibbottes
 A redde gurdyll of John Frongk the younger
 A pece of a Cors of John Wall goldsmythe⁹³

No other information is given about these individuals, and it is not possible to confirm if they were all members. None of the men’s names are present in the extant membership lists, but that does not preclude their membership. The chantry certificate for the Palmers notes that in addition to the valued plate of the guild, there were goods and ornaments that appear in an inventory but separate from the surviving certificate.⁹⁴ It is likely here that these potential items would be found, if they were indeed gifts to the guild.

While inventories are frequently used to inform understanding of guild wealth, property and ceremony, the aim here has been to use them as tools to view engagement with the guild.⁹⁵ The act of gifting an item to the Palmers is evidence of active thought and acknowledgement of the guild by the individual member. While the extant wills leave little indication of explicit investment in the Palmers, the guild inventory illuminates a wider effort by members to bestow material wealth upon the fraternity.

Microcosms of guild activity

Active engagement can be assessed beyond an examination of the payment of membership fees or gifting practices, through evidence for group activity between guild members within their respective locations. This illuminates the character of guild community afforded to members in as far as the utilisation of guild connections demonstrates the potential social benefits offered by membership within disparate communities that possessed a concentration of brethren.

Of the seventy non-Ludlow wills sampled, only eight turned to fellow Palmers as executors or supervisors.⁹⁶ For example, a Palmer from Bristol, John Meysam, appointed fellow guild member John Drewis as his executor.⁹⁷ Both were merchants, likely one of the reasons for appointment.

Richard Mayhew, Bishop of Worcester, likewise appointed an executor who operated in the same sphere: the archdeacon of Hereford, who was also a Palmer.⁹⁸ Testators frequently chose their executors from those closest to them, such as their wives and children, emphasising the gravity of the responsibility. John Meysam bequeathed the residue of his goods (after his debts and funeral expenses were paid) to John Drewis so ‘that he doo for my soule according to his consyence’. Meysam evidently trusted Drewis to act in his best interests for the care of his soul and conferred on Drewis freedom to act on his behalf.⁹⁹ Their devotional practices during life were already aligned through membership of the Palmers’ Guild, so it can be presumed Meysam felt confident that Drewis would spend the residue money wisely in accordance with preferences expressed while alive. In these cases, membership of the guild is one aspect of the close relationship illustrated by appointment as executor, while occupational ties were likewise highly influential. In the Jesus Guild at St Paul’s, London, there are a few examples of members looking to their brethren as executors and witnesses where guild membership reinforced pre-existing connections to secure the level of trust necessary for involvement in testamentary procedures.¹⁰⁰ In some cases, then, mutual membership of the Palmers may have impacted the choice of overseer and executor in testamentary evidence.

One case of a fellow Palmer acting as an overseer of a will is suggestive of a relationship fostered more heavily through guild membership than occupational or parochial relations. John Thomas, merchant of Bristol, appointed Abbot Morgan Blethyn of Llantarnam Abbey as one of his overseers.¹⁰¹ John Thomas’ will suggests a connection with the Welsh Marches, for he left £10 to the parish church of Abergavenny for an obit to pray for the souls of his mother and father, along with his own. The relationship Thomas had with Llantarnam Abbey is not explicit, as is often the case with testamentary evidence. Among a variety of pious bequests, Llantarnam was one of the primary benefactors, receiving £5 for building works with the possibility of a further £30 should Thomas’ children predecease him. If Thomas grew up in Abergavenny, where evidently his parents must have resided, or were buried, there may have been good reason for Thomas to establish a relationship with Llantarnam; it was fewer than twenty miles from Abergavenny and situated on a route between that settlement and Bristol, where Thomas lived. Yet it certainly was not the closest religious house to Abergavenny (notably, Llanthony *Prima* was only ten miles away). Was the strength of this relationship due to their shared membership of the Palmers’ Guild? Thomas joined the guild in 1507/8, and Blethyn joined in 1515, fourteen years prior to the proving of Thomas’ will in 1529.¹⁰² Their respective residencies in Bristol and

Llantarnam were not so unreasonably far from Ludlow that they would not have encountered each other at guild events; it is possible that they both attended Masses or feasts in the years following Blethyn's enrolment. Prominent and appropriate friends were carefully selected to be responsible for carrying out the wishes of a testator, as a certain level of trust was required of an overseer.¹⁰³ One had to be trustworthy, possessing a good reputation and status to fulfil the required role in the testamentary process. For Blethyn, who did not dwell in Bristol, where the testator resided and where a number of his testamentary wishes had to be fulfilled, the possession of enough social capital and the ability to work cordially with the executors of the will was a necessity. It was not unusual for abbots to occupy the role of supervisor; in this case, the abbot's trustworthiness was derived not only from his ecclesiastical status but from Blethyn's and Thomas' mutual membership of a prominent religious guild.¹⁰⁴ Thomas' executors would have known of his membership of the guild, and the reputation that accompanied it; they would assume that Blethyn possessed a similar reputation. Regardless of whether the Palmers were the primary source of a connection between Blethyn and Thomas, or a secondary one that reinforced a pre-existing relationship, common membership of a fraternity can only have strengthened their bond and reinforced Thomas' decision to appoint Blethyn as overseer.

There were, on occasion, groups of Palmers present in other parts of the testamentary process. John Ednam of Leicester utilised two fellow members as witnesses to his last will and testament; so, too, did John Hadden, Nicholas Burwey (both of Coventry) and William Lendall I of Reading.¹⁰⁵ Witnesses held an important role in the verification process of testamentary provision and were rarely part of the testator's family, due to their obvious vested interests if the contents of the will were disputed.¹⁰⁶ William Marlow and John Chamber were two of Hadden's witnesses. Marlow's occupation is not listed in the guild registers, but Chamber, as a merchant, may have known the draper Hadden in a professional context. Two of three witnesses of Burwey's last will and testament were Palmers and fellow members of the civic elite: Henry Wall and Thomas White.¹⁰⁷ Lendall's two Palmer witnesses were both shoemakers, while Lendall himself was a dyer, suggesting further possible connections through business. The examples are relatively few in the context of the extensive membership of the guild and probably reflect findings elsewhere on the sociability of witnessing. It was common, if not preferable, to call on neighbours to perform this task of witnesses as part of 'their duties of neighbourliness'.¹⁰⁸ The limited occurrences of Palmers witnessing fellow brethren's wills may be a result of the prominence of neighbours as witnesses.

If we turn to membership records, there are further glimpses of members supporting each other. The evidence is limited but there are a few tantalising examples of relationships between Palmers across England. For example, the Palmer John Soket of Bristol paid for the membership of both Thomas Harry of St Ives (Cornwall) in 1503/4 and Nicholas and Joan Young of Easton in Gordano (Somerset) in 1504/5.¹⁰⁹ John Ketilsby of Coventry paid for John and Elizabeth Portar of Balsall (West Midlands), who are described as ‘late of Coventry’ – perhaps a relationship formed from their mutual residence in Coventry.¹¹⁰

However, support for fellow members and, indeed, collective action by guild members can be viewed more clearly through a larger corpus of extant sources: deeds. In a property deed of 1500, John Hunt of Brimfield (Herefordshire) presented Walter Morton, warden of the Palmers, thirteen named men (two recognisably stewards and the others most likely elders) and ‘the Brethren of the Gild’ with land in the liberty of Richards Castle (which straddles the Herefordshire–Shropshire county border).¹¹¹ Hunt may have begun the process of joining the guild in 1497/8, as a man of his name was entered in the riding book for that year.¹¹² The folio has been torn and the exact location of this John Hunt is missing from the surviving portion of the folio. However, it is likely that it was him: the riding books are arranged topographically and the next folio is labelled ‘Leominster’ and includes places such as Richards Castle, Orleton and Stockton – all neighbouring villages to Brimfield. Membership of the guild would certainly be probable, given Hunt’s gift of land to the guild.¹¹³ Definitely two, possibly three, of the witnesses were Palmers: John Tomkes alias Weaver, John Higgons and William Newman.¹¹⁴ Tomkes and Higgons resided within a thirty-five-mile radius of Ludlow, while Newman lived almost twice that distance from Ludlow. They were likely in Ludlow for guild-related activities. Common membership of the Palmers apparently informed personal connections that were manifest in the formal process of land transfer, and vice versa.

In similar situations, witnesses were drawn from further afield. On 12 August 1499, Robert Somerfeld of Marlborough granted three tenements in the same town to Richard Malebroke and John Heriettes (also both of Marlborough).¹¹⁵ A second deed, dated 31 August 1499, witnessed the land being returned to Robert by the two grantees with the condition that upon his death the land shall be passed onto Walter Morton, warden of the Palmers’ Guild, his successors and the brethren.¹¹⁶ While ensuring his possession of the tenements for the duration of his life, it allowed the gift of land – an act of pious charity – to the Palmers. Throughout the sixteenth century, the guild received between 6s 4d and 10s 4d annually from rents there.¹¹⁷ The reason for this transfer of land to a group of feoffees was

ostensibly an attempt to avoid certain dues and taxes that fell on property endowments – as the land ultimately was to go to a religious guild, it was specifically to avoid falling foul of the Mortmain laws.¹¹⁸ As a benefactor, Robert would have been remembered by name by the guild's priests, both during his lifetime and after his death. What this case more interestingly demonstrates, at least for this study, is the connections within the Palmers' membership. The initial grantor, Robert Somerfeld, was most likely a member. Someone with the name of Somerfeld from Marlborough was certainly enrolled in 1498/9, but that membership list has deteriorated in such a way that the given name is not legible.¹¹⁹ The two grantees, Richard Malebroke and John Heriettes, were both members of the guild and joined in 1485 with their wives.¹²⁰ The first deed at the beginning of August was witnessed by one Palmer, among others: John Stodham joined in 1485 with his wife, Margaret.¹²¹ John Fryse, constable of Marlborough, was also a witness, and was posthumously enrolled by his widow, Alice, in 1503/4.¹²² The second deed, allowing Robert the right to hold those tenements until his death, was witnessed by a group of men that again included John Stodham. One William Skern also witnessed the deed, and a Thomas Skern of Marlborough and his wife, Juliana, had joined the guild in 1486/7.¹²³ It is possible they were related and that this is another tie to the guild, but there is no trace of a William Skern in the extant membership lists.

What can be learned about membership from this one example of land transfer in fifteenth-century Marlborough? The majority, if not all, of these men were local to Marlborough. Yet it was not only their shared locality that bound these men together: at the very least, four shared mutual membership to the Palmers' Guild. Somerfield's choice of two men who were members and implicitly tied to the guild may have been an act to ensure the successful transition of the property to the guild after his death. It certainly appears that this group of Palmers was operating within Marlborough to support the guild through an endowment from afar. The cooperation and inter-reliance of these four men suggest the existence of a circle that encouraged guild membership – two joining the same year, one a decade later and the other posthumously by his widow – and may have strengthened pre-existing links within the town itself. Acting in close conjunction with various brethren, as illustrated through the legal transaction under examination here, Fryse must have been aware of the existence and active nature of the Palmers' Guild, although not yet himself a member. We have already seen that the steward spent money on the brethren of Marlborough while on his annual visit to collect fees from existing members and recruit new ones. The rent collectors of the guild integrated Marlborough into their purview upon receipt of this property, as the property was rented out as a source of income, and the collection of

the rent from there can be seen as late as 1533/4.¹²⁴ Ultimately, this pair of deeds resulted in the Palmers maintaining an active presence in Marlborough. If Fryse's associates were members, it is likely his wife would know of their existence and activities. Alice Fryse joining the guild and simultaneously enrolling her deceased husband is an example of the widespread knowledge of the Palmers and their activities in Marlborough.¹²⁵ That these Palmers were calling upon others who were not only their neighbours but also shared a common association with the guild suggests that their membership was more than nominal, despite Marlborough being located some hundred miles from Ludlow. The social capital gained from membership (especially in the eyes of other brethren) could have facilitated the choice of witnesses and feoffees. Guild membership itself was assisted by local connections – John Fryse may have been enrolled by his wife after his death precisely because they both evidently knew members of the Palmers who lived in Marlborough.

Two separate but interrelated land transfers to the Palmers within the lordship of Eastham (Worcestershire) are indicative of the activities of guild members in both fostering a community among themselves and supporting the guild from afar. In January 1499, William Glover of Eastham demised his properties within the lordship to a group of four men: William Hereford, Thomas Walker, Richard Nassh and John Walker.¹²⁶ Following a similar model to the Marlborough case, these four men granted the land and tenements back to Glover on the condition that they be granted to the warden of the Palmers' Guild upon his death.¹²⁷ It is highly probable that Glover was a Palmer although his name does not appear in the surviving records. In return for this grant of land, the guild agreed to grant him a weekly stipend of 5d for the duration of his life and bear the expense of his burial.¹²⁸ At least two of the men to whom Glover initially devised the land were Palmers (Thomas Walker and Richard Nassh),¹²⁹ and were evidently responsible for overseeing the transaction after Glover's death. The transfer of land from Glover to this group of men, and the enfeoffment back to Glover, before being given to the guild, served a practical, legal purpose, yet there were further effects for the guild, as an institution, and the members themselves. Most clearly, Glover had the reassurance that his gift would enter the guild's possession upon his death, overseen by fellow brethren who had a vested interest in the guild. The Palmers benefited in an obvious way through the acquisition of land that would bring them an increased annual income.¹³⁰ Strikingly, these interactions demonstrate that a group of guild members was active in a village outside of Ludlow and was taking the assurance of a gift to the guild under its own purview. The guild was the cause of bringing these men together and this gift is evidence of a pocket of guild activity initiated by individual members,

which, in this case, continued until Glover's death and the transfer of the property to the Palmers.

Gifts bestowed upon the guild were in constant flux. Indeed, the fortunes of any guild was dependent on support from individuals, which could be unpredictable. While there was an active group of Palmers in Eastham in 1499 with the Glover case, the guild did not receive any further property there for almost twenty years. In 1518, William Nichols and John Owens quitclaimed six selions (arable land) in Eastham to Richard Downe, warden of the Palmers.¹³¹ The investment by both men in the Palmers is clear from the joint passing of land, but the community of Palmers in Eastham is, once again, arresting in its activity. A few weeks later, William Nichols gave Richard Downe a messuage and half a virgate of land in Eastham, which he himself had received in 1503.¹³² While this deed was endorsed in Ludlow, it was witnessed by none other than John Owens, who had quitclaimed the selions to the guild jointly with Nichols only three weeks before.¹³³ Another witness was the Eastham Palmer Thomas Walker. Was this Walker the same man who was part of the group that William Glover endowed with his land, with the view to gift it to the Palmers, back in 1499? William Nichols had previously been employed by Richard Nassh, one of Walker's fellow Palmers and an active member in the land transfer of 1499. Nassh may have introduced Nichols to the Palmers (Nichols joined in 1503/4, after Nassh's involvement in the Glover case, and it is at that stage that Nichols was employed by Nassh) and to Thomas Walker. Walker continued paying his membership fee until 1511, when he completed the required sum of 13s 4d for him and his wife. If it was indeed the same man, his involvement with the Palmers was long and sustained, and far beyond the annual payment of membership fees, which is often the only relationship discernible between the guild and the individual. On the same day of Nichols' gift of land to the Palmers, another deed was drawn up appointing Thomas Walker as Nichols' attorney, to receive seisin of the land and to deliver it to Richard Downe.¹³⁴ Walker was clearly trusted by Nichols, and presumably by Downe, and his appointment is suggestive of a well-established relationship of some longevity between himself and Nichols.

The Nichols gift highlights two spheres of participation in the Palmers and demonstrates the vitality of the guild's social function. First, it provides an insight into the interaction between groups of Palmers from different villages. A deed was, first and foremost, a legal document. Yet these deeds can be read against the grain to expose the guild ideal of cooperation between members, despite the differences in the witnesses' geographic locations. The witness list for Nichols' gift comprised two Eastham men and two Ludlow-based Palmers. This deed, along with the other Eastham deeds, reveals a community of Palmers in a village that

was not dominated by the guild's infrastructure.¹³⁵ This is equally true of the Marlborough microcosm, which is perhaps even more striking considering the almost certain existence of other guilds in the more urbanised Marlborough, compared to the village of Eastham.¹³⁶ The Palmers were more than a mere annual visitor who arrived to collect fees: they were present in the very fabric of village society, sustained through the layers of interpersonal relationships between its members.

While the nature of the surviving documents relating to the Palmers' Guild makes locating and defining matches between the names in the membership lists and those in the guild deeds a difficult task, these examples have shown how the guild permeated the activities of its members. These examples are representative of the more widespread phenomenon of devising or bequeathing goods or property to a church, monastery or guild as an act of devotion and piety. The choice of witnesses and feoffees holds value in illuminating the social ties that existed between members of the guild. The prevalence of fellow brethren in these examples is striking. It is clear from these case studies that when brethren gifted property to the Palmers in towns other than Ludlow, they were utilising their fellow members that lived nearby. For the insurance of property transfer, it is perhaps unsurprising that benefactors wished for witnesses in the local area to back their claim should the need arise, but the implications of choosing fellow members (and the wider suggestions of how membership worked, especially outside of Ludlow) give this issue a more tantalising relevance. Those who gave land to the Palmers did not exist in isolation. While the land may ultimately appear to come from one or two individuals, there was a network of guild members behind that specific man or group.¹³⁷ The layers of connection reveal the Palmers of Eastham and Marlborough who gifted land to the guild were working within a community of brethren that existed in their own geographical- and trade-based communities. The process the Palmers' Guild undertook in order to engage and maintain an active and enlarging brethren was a *collective* endeavour that included both its brethren and its governing council.

Landlords

The guild owned significant property outside of Ludlow, acquired through investments and from donations.¹³⁸ The majority of the guild's land was gifted to them, and, in turn, it created a long-lasting relationship between a guild and a village or town. The transaction between the original giver and the guild endured, of course, with the guild no doubt required to pray for the soul of their benefactor, but the gift of land had an effect that

permeated well beyond the individuals involved in the transfer. As the guild acquired land, they shouldered a responsibility that required them to continually reinforce their relationship with a place, and by extension, the surrounding community. The guild became as any other wealthy member of a community might and rented out their land. The stewards may have been the primary agents involved in this process, taking account of the guild's properties while on their annual circuits to collect membership fees from new and current members alike. In 1503, a memorandum was noted in the steward's riding book, in between pages recording what membership fees had been collected, of the tenements and lands (including their acreages) in five places nearby to where he was collecting fees.¹³⁹ The obligations of the guild persevered throughout the year and was not reliant on the steward's annual visit. They employed men to repair properties: Michael Pikthorne was paid for fourteen days for his labour in Eastham in 1533/4.¹⁴⁰

Ownership of land was a natural avenue through which the Palmers were present in communities outside of Ludlow, which also materialised in the receipt of heriots from tenants. For those tenants outside of Ludlow, a beast or the cash equivalent was due to the guild upon their death.¹⁴¹ The amount of cash (if given in lieu of their best beast) varied between properties. In an indenture from 1518, John Owens of Eastham was bound to pay 6s 8d upon his death if he did not provide his best beast; almost twenty years later, William Hill, also in Eastham, agreed that his heirs would pay 13s 4d as his heriot if an animal was not provided.¹⁴² In 1514/15, the guild received 8s for heriots from tenants in Ashford and Hopton (both in Shropshire).¹⁴³ Further heriots were collected on behalf of the guild in 1517/18 from Hopton.¹⁴⁴ While cash was the more common method of fulfilling a deceased tenant's obligation to the Palmers, John Russell of Brockhampton (Herefordshire) delivered a horse to the guild in fulfilment of his father's obligation.¹⁴⁵

Ownership of property also came with the requirement for the guild itself to fulfil obligations – social and financial – to the local lord. In 1532, the guild obtained a license to hold lands in Eastham from its lord, Richard Cornwall, for the sum of 20s per annum.¹⁴⁶ Alongside the annual fee, the guild also gifted Richard Cornwall half-gallon measures of wine throughout the 1530s and also paid for half a gallon of wine to the court at Eastham in 1533/4 and 1538/9.¹⁴⁷ Likewise in 1538/9, the guild paid 19d for wine for their 'business' in Eastham, and then a further 27d was spent by the stewards on their 'business' at Eastham on behalf of the guild.¹⁴⁸ What exactly the business was that brought the stewards there is not made explicit in the surviving records. Yet what is clear is that the Palmers' Guild was unequivocally present in Eastham. Men arrived to repair tenements, to provide wine to the local court and to the lord, and

to bring together guild members over potations. Over and above that, the guild had a relationship with the manor's priest: in 1516/17, Sir Richard Paige was gifted membership in return for releasing his part of an unidentified indenture.¹⁴⁹

Other locations across Herefordshire and Shropshire experienced similar interactions with the guild, usually as the Palmers sent men to repair the properties they owned. In the 1530s and 1540s, expenses were recorded for building materials and men to labour at the guild's properties in Thonglands and Diddlebury (both in Shropshire).¹⁵⁰ In Herefordshire, in the small village of Kingsland, the guild took on small but regular costs associated with maintenance throughout the sixteenth century.¹⁵¹ Sometimes men were employed by the guild for days on end to repair properties in their extramural locations, like in Ashford (Shropshire) in 1540.¹⁵² The guild's ownership of properties also led to local employment: men of Leominster were paid to bring the rent money (from the guild's properties there) to Ludlow.¹⁵³ Further financial obligations were due to the bailiffs of Richards Castle each year, as the guild owned property there, and each year, the guild duly paid the required sum.¹⁵⁴

The guild's presence as a landowner outside of Ludlow came with further causes for them to interact with other communities. In 1330, the parson of Bitterley (Shropshire) granted lands in multiple locations in Shropshire to the Palmers, with the stipulation that they pay a 20s annuity to a chaplain in Bitterley.¹⁵⁵ Over two hundred years later, the guild was still fulfilling this obligation, delivering 10s twice yearly to the churchwardens of Bitterley.¹⁵⁶ The guild had a presence in many places outside of Ludlow, permeating the interactions of a village, manor or town, providing employment and changing the physical environment.

Conclusion

Membership of the Palmers' Guild was pervasive, holding significance across medieval Wales and England. For many, the guild was not a distant entity that only arrived once a year to collect fees but instead was present in the very fabric of members' lives. Annual gatherings, static agents representing the guild, the presence of the guild as a landlord, collecting rent, employing men to undertake repairs, regular interaction with local governing structures (courts and lords) and with local religious communities combined to create a potent reminder of the guild for its members. Every action, be it a gift of material goods, a monetary donation, a bequest of land, the utilisation of fellow members in their local area or the sharing of food and drink with the steward and fellow brethren,

demonstrates that distance was not a deterrent for participation in the social community fostered by the guild.

Mobility was a characteristic of the Palmers' Guild: one that was cemented in its foundation myth and then regularly reinforced over the course of the guild's existence. The guild visibly celebrated their pilgrimage origins with the commissioning of a stained-glass window in the fifteenth century and, indeed, in naming their organisation 'Palmers', which referenced the palm leaves brought back from the Holy Land by pilgrims in the Middle Ages (harking back to Christ's entry into Jerusalem on a donkey). This consistent reference to pilgrimage reinforced the idea of mobility (alongside the obvious spiritual association) and advertised the guild as such. The idea of a mobile community was then reinforced by the guild stewards' regular rides across Wales and England to meet with brethren and recruit new members, with often up to a third of the year spent outside of Ludlow. Even abnormal visitations by the warden to places outside of the standard areas of guild activity, such as a visit to Walsingham (Norfolk) in the sixteenth century, served to reinforce an image of mobility and a community that stretched across space – and, of course, across time with centuries of predecessors.¹⁵⁷

The medieval guild ethos, as Gervase Rosser has argued, placed a high premium on active participation, but it was not forced by the Palmers: there was neither a fine for lack of attendance at the Pentecost feast nor a financial reprimand for missing a payment at the annual collection of membership fees. Instead, active involvement was encouraged through mechanisms that enabled members to have easy access to guild officers. The guild was a constant presence in certain villages, towns and cities via the office of the solester, regardless of how much money they received from individuals there, revealing an investment in its wide community of members. In fact, the devolved infrastructure of the guild helps explain why individuals chose to become members. In certain places, it must have been difficult not to interact with the guild, thanks to expenditure by the guild in the localities, solesters and the guild's presence as a landlord.

The Palmers promoted connectivity, a sense of belonging and community, even at distances some hundreds of miles from Ludlow. Despite the obstacles presented by a geographically diverse membership, the Palmers' Guild was an organisation where the conscious decisions of the guild officers and the members themselves promoted solidarity among their ranks. The meanings attached to membership and its form was influenced by the members themselves, creating communities of brethren that were suited to local circumstances and needs. As will be seen in the remainder of the book, membership took on an active life in locations across Wales and England.

Notes

1. Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', in *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350–1750*, ed. Susan Wright (London, 1988), 35. Indeed, Rosser's scholarship regularly emphasises the cyclical and reciprocal nature of fraternities: Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250–1550* (Oxford, 2015), 76; Gervase Rosser, 'Big Brotherhood: Guilds in Urban Politics in Late Medieval England', in *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900–1800*, ed. Ian A. Gadd and Patrick Wallis (London, 2006), 27–42; Gervase Rosser, 'The Ethics of Confraternity', in *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Leiden, 2019), 91–108.
2. The Palmers operated, within Ludlow, as a typical parish fraternity: they possessed characteristics such as a *cursus honorum* with town government, provided spiritual benefits and were an outlet for local power. Rachael Harkes, 'Joining a Fraternity in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow, c. 1250–1551' (PhD diss., University of Durham, 2021), [chapter 1](#). These characteristics are typical of a fraternity in a small town: Rosser, 'Big Brotherhood', 27–42; Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 67, no. 1 (January 1992), 69–97.
3. SA: LB/5/3/40.
4. For example, the Palmers gave one gallon of wine to Worcester Priory in 1511/12, while monks such as William Fordham and William Barnysley were still paying their admission fees. SA: LB/5/3/40; LB/5/3/9, f. 49r.
5. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, [chapter 3](#).
6. The solesters were expected to pay their membership fee – their role as a representative did not equate the gift of brotherhood. Cases when an individual was gifted brotherhood are clearly illustrated and an example can be found in LB/5/3/40, along with the lack of completed fine for the solesters recruited.
7. The indulgence was granted by Pope Leo X and therefore can be dated to between 1513 and 1521. The Bodleian Library, Arch.A.B.8 (6).
8. Elizabeth A. New, *Records of the Jesus Guild in St Paul's Cathedral, c. 1450–1550: An Edition of Oxford, Bodleian MS Tanner 221, and Associated Material*, London Record Society, vol. 56 (Woodbridge, 2022), 7–8.
9. Robert Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007), 216. See also an unspecified suit involving the proctors recorded in the guild's accounts for 1523: New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 159.
10. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, 35.
11. The stewards and the warden were the primary officers. The stewards held the heavy burden of responsibility for the guild's finances and were therefore involved in many aspects of the guild's activities.
12. For example, SA: LB/5/3/32.
13. SA: LB/5/3/32.
14. For his reimbursement see SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 27r. For the names of those recruited, see LB/5/3/12.
15. The money spent on brethren was not the distribution of alms. The sums of money that the Palmers were spending on 'brethren' and 'men' of the guild were paltry, ranging from 1d to 20d, distributed annually. Even the highest amount, 20d, would not have been enough to sustain one member of the guild. For a full discussion see Harkes, 'Joining a Fraternity', 226–8.
16. SA: LB/5/3/40.

17. SA: LB/5/3/19.
18. SA: LB/5/3/40; LB/5/3/31, mm. 4–5; LB/5/3/32, m. 5.
19. SA: LB/5/3/32.
20. SA: LB/5/3/38.
21. SA: LB/5/3/40.
22. SA: LB/5/3/40.
23. SA: LB/5/3/32, m. 5. For later years, such as 1544/5, see the warden's accounts for expenses on men of Coventry, Churchstoke, Oswestry and so on. SA: LB/5/3/34.
24. For example, SA: LB/5/3/24.
25. SA: LB/5/3/23. There is evidence that feasts were also held at All Saints (SA: LB/5/3/24, m. 5), and others have suggested that feasts were held at Michaelmas and Christmas as well: Madge Moran, *The Guildhall, Ludlow* (Ludlow, 2011), 5. Further interrogation of the guild's accounts might reveal whether four feasts were indeed held each year, or if the Pentecostal feast was the only consistent feature over the guild's lifetime. It is certainly unusual that the guild did not have an annual feast on one of their patron saints' days, such as 27 December for St John the Evangelist, and instead chose a moving feast such as Pentecost.
26. Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33, no. 4 (October 1994), 438.
27. Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', 33. Eight guilds in Cambridgeshire included the punishment of a fine for non-attendance in their guild ordinances: Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c. 1350–1558* (Woodbridge, 1996), 65.
28. Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', 34.
29. Moran, *The Guildhall*, 1–6.
30. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', 437.
31. SA: LB/5/3/31, m. 4.
32. SA: LB/5/3/40.
33. SA: LB/5/3/31, mm. 3–4.
34. SA: LB/5/3/31, m. 4.
35. SA: LB/5/3/40.
36. SA: LB/5/3/31, m. 4.
37. See Chapter 2.
38. *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. 'solicitor'; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'soliciter'.
39. Michael Faraday, *Ludlow, 1085–1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), 81; SA: LB/5/3/33.
40. See Chapters 2 and 4. Guild 'procurators' do appear in guild accounts for the 1420s, but only as limited examples. The accounts do not reference what sort of work they undertook for the guild, and the fees they pay them are higher than the money given to 'solesters' in the sixteenth century (for example, 3s 4d was paid to the guild's procurator in Gloucester in 1426/7). It seems likely that these were men employed to act as agents for specific guild business.
41. SA: LB/5/3/31, m. 5.
42. M.J. Angold et al., 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2, ed. A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh (London, 1973), 134–40; Faraday, *Ludlow*, 81.

43. For an example of solester fees: SA: LB/5/3/31.
44. SA: LB/5/3/19.
45. SA: LB/5/3/19.
46. SA: LB/5/3/31, m 5. These locations were in the Marcher lordships of Oswestry and Bromfield and Yale, and the counties of Worcestershire, Shropshire and Herefordshire.
47. SA: LB/5/3/2–10.
48. SA: LB/5/3/7.
49. Previous suggestions that the solesters were present only in important market towns would imply that the guild was concerned with catering to places where they had a large membership. Angold et al., 'Religious Guild', 134–40.
50. SA: LB/5/3/40.
51. SA: LB/5/3/40.
52. TNA: PROB 11/16/659.
53. Angold et al., 'Religious Guild', 134–40.
54. Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late-Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1 (1991), 173–89.
55. Claire Kennan, 'Guilds and Society in Louth, Lincolnshire c. 1450–1550' (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2018); Sally Badham, 'Mercantile Involvement in Religious Guilds', in *The Medieval Merchant: Proceedings of the 2012 Harlaxton Medieval Symposium*, ed. Caroline Barron and Anne F. Sutton (Donington, 2014), 221–41; Christine Carpenter, 'Town and Country: The Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-century Warwickshire', in *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196–1996*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stroud, 1997), 62–79; Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1998); David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 2000), 137.
56. Clive Burgess, 'Obligations and Strategy: Managing Memory in the Later Medieval Parish', *Monumental Brass Society Transactions*, 18, no. 4 (2012), 289–310.
57. TNA: PROB 11/14/169. It has been mislabelled on the catalogue as 'Thomas Eyton of Ashbury'.
58. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 8or.
59. TNA: PROB 11/4/193; Thomas Procter Wadley, *Notes or Abstracts of the Wills Contained in the Volume Entitled the Great Orphan Book and Book of Wills: In the Council House at Bristol* (Bristol, 1886), 138. For rent gathered from 'Sturmy's grownde' see SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 6v, 7r.
60. SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 6v, 7r.
61. Clive Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered', in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. Michael Hicks (Gloucester, 1990), 14–33; Clive Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 2018); Richard Asquith, 'Piety and Trust: Testators and Executors in Pre-Reformation London' (PhD diss., University of London, 2022); Rob Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England: Reconstructing Piety* (Woodbridge, 2006); Rob Lutton and Elisabeth Salter, *Pieties in Transition: Religious Practices and Experiences, c. 1400–1600* (Aldershot, 2007).
62. Kennan, 'Guilds and Society', 27.
63. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, 91.

64. Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, 137; Badham, 'Mercantile Involvement', 229–30.
65. Badham, 'Mercantile Involvement', 231–9.
66. Badham, 'Mercantile Involvement', 225–7.
67. Carpenter, 'Town and Country', 73.
68. Carpenter, 'Town and Country', 74.
69. It is unclear exactly what sense of 'gages' the guild was referring to here. It could be that of payments, security or bonds, but some of the items listed under the 'tresour of gages' explicitly state that they are the gift of an individual.
70. SA: LB/5/3/10, ff. 26v, 36v.
71. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 6r.
72. TNA: PROB 11/16/659.
73. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 6r.
74. Nut cups were so named due to their construction from a coconut. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v.
75. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v.
76. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 80r. Peke had connections with the Marches through her role as supplying torches for Prince Arthur's funeral. TNA: LC 2/1.
77. As discussed in detail in the Introduction.
78. As those given by Thomas Rogers, Richard Forthingfolde, Henry Ogell, Master Hosyer and William Stathum. See also the addition of money given by Elizabeth Reed when dispensing with her deceased husband's bequest to the guild. New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 12, 102, 126, 148.
79. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v.
80. SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 6. For Bagot's involvement in Bristol's governance see James Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England: The Bristol Elite, Urban Community and the Crown, c. 1471 – c.1553' (PhD diss., University of the West of England, 2006), 110 and appendix 2.
81. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 18v.
82. SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 17v, 18r. It has not been possible to identify Sir John Bristowe in other records.
83. Kathleen E. Kennedy, 'The Coconut Cup as Material and Medium: Extended Ecologies', in *Old Media and the Medieval Concept: Media Ecologies Before Early Modernity*, ed. Thora Brylowe and Stephen Yeager (Montreal, 2021), 79–102.
84. They were simultaneously 'familiar and unusual, exceptional and common': Kathleen E. Kennedy, 'Gripping It by the Husk: The Medieval English Coconut', *The Medieval Globe*, 3, no. 1 (2017), 21.
85. Kennedy, 'Gripping It by the Husk', 18.
86. The guild purchased spices that would have been used for cooking, certainly, as in SA: LB/5/3/24, but the spice plates would have held spiced foods, such as spiced cookies or candies, or spices that were used to sprinkle on top of food to enhance flavour.
87. For example, the hearse cloth for general use at All Saints, Bristol, was inscribed the donor's initials, while Jane, Viscountess Lisle, willed her executors to provide twenty-four sets of vestments with her arms on them for twenty-four parishes 'to haue my soule remembred and prayed for'. Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls*, 229; TNA: PROB 11/12/213. For mazers and requests for prayers see C.M. Woolgar, 'Mazers and the Drinking Culture of Late Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 49,

no. 5 (2023), 750. For drinking vessels as a commemorative object in religious houses, see Sheila Sweetinburgh, 'Remembering the Dead at Dinner-Time', in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Burlington, 2010), 278–88.

88. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', 435.

89. The verses in 1 Corinthians are the only account that emphasises active remembrance associated with both the bread *and* wine, although it is nevertheless implied in the synoptic gospels; indeed, only Luke explicitly states that the eating of bread was to be done 'in remembrance'.

90. For the Mass in pre-Reformation England see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, 2005), 91–130.

91. This was the total of items that were given as pledge across three occasions. New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 177, 185, 210–11.

92. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, 117; loans were not limited to individuals but also to institutions. The leading fraternities in Louth, Lincolnshire, loaned money on two occasions to the churchwardens of the parish church – a striking demonstration of the support that fraternities provided the parish. Kennan, 'Guilds and Society', 180.

93. A demysent (demi-cent) was a type of girdle (belt) that fastened with a hook at the front. Cors could refer to either ordinary, coarse wool or a material woven in strips, richly adorned with silver and gold, that was often used as a ceinture or belt. SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 5v, 6r; *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. 'cors'.

94. A. Hamilton Thompson, 'Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries, Under the Acts of 37 Henry VIII, Ca IV., and I Edward VI., Ca XIV', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, Ser. 3, 10 (1910), 328.

95. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, 142–3; Kate Giles, 'A Table of Alabaster with the Story of the Doom': The Religious Objects and Spaces of the Guild of Our Blessed Virgin, Boston (Lincs)', in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Farnham, 2010), 267–88.

96. TNA: PROB 11/18/327 (Richard Mayhew/Mayo); PROB 11/18/61 (John Meysam); PROB 11/22/545 (Nicholas Hyde); PROB 11/23/170 (John Thomas); PROB 11/17/471 (Robert Corbett); PROB 11/15/461 (John Wilcox II); PROB 11/19/347 (Nicholas Burwey); PROB 11/19/312 (William Pisford).

97. TNA: PROB 11/18/61; SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4; LB/5/1/4, m. 4.

98. TNA: PROB 11/18/327; SA: B/5/3/7, f. 46v.

99. The trust placed in executors to deploy the residue of estates for the good of the soul is discussed in Richard Asquith, 'Piety and Trust: Testators and Executors in Pre-Reformation London' (PhD diss., University of London, 2022), [chapter 4](#); Richard Asquith, 'Rebuilding St Andrew Undershaft: A Study in Executorial Discretion in Early Tudor London', *The London Journal*, 49, no. 2 (June 2024), 123–46.

100. New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 12–3.

101. TNA: PROB 11/23/170.

102. SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 36v; LB/5/3/10, f. 20r.

103. Asquith, 'Piety and Trust', [chapter 5](#).

104. Examples of heads of religious houses as executors or supervisors can be found in Martin Heale, *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Oxford, 2016), 241.

105. TNA: PROB/11/18/523; PROB/11/19/241; PROB/11/19/374; PROB/11/18/232; SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4; LB/5/3/7, f. 28r; LB/5/3/6, f. 19v; LB/5/3/7, f. 58v.

106. Justin Colson, 'Local Communities in Fifteenth Century London: Craft, Parish and Neighbourhood' (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2010), 273.
107. TNA: PROB/11/19/374; SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 38r; LB/5/3/7, f. 29v.
108. Craig Muldrew, 'The Culture of Reconciliation: Community and the Settlement of Economic Disputes in Early Modern England', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 926–7. Justin Colson's research on fifteenth-century London revealed typical patterns of reliance on neighbours or even those who were present in the location in which the writing of the will took place. Colson, 'Local Communities', 273–6.
109. This happened with some regularity for both living and dead members of the guild. In the case of Thomas Harry, he was entered while alive, while Nicholas and Joan Young were dead. John Soket and his wife Joan entered the guild between 1485 and 1489. SA: LB/5/1/2; LB/5/3/5, f. 55r; LB/5/3/6, f. 37v.
110. John and Elizabeth Portar were both alive when joining the Palmers. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 28v.
111. SA: LB/5/2/1357.
112. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 69r.
113. This land was used as a source of income for the guild. For example, they rented it to Roger Daccus of Richards Castle in 1536 for a biannual fee of 10s. SA: LB/5/2/1358.
114. John Tomkes alias Weaver of Worcester joined the Palmers in 1503/4: SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 71r. The John Higgons who acted as witness was one of two possible Palmers, either located in Lingen, Herefordshire, or Preston, Shropshire (just outside Shrewsbury). Both joined the guild in 1505/6: SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 11r; LB/5/1/3, m. 3. Less likely is William Newman, who may be the William Newman of Caerleon who joined the Palmers in 1427, although that date suggests he may have been deceased by 1500 when this land transfer took place – perhaps the man named in this deed was a son or grandson of the Palmer: SA: LB/5/3/13, f. 2v.
115. These last names are spelled either Malebroke or Malybrok and Heriettes or Heryott. SA: LB/5/2/1437–8.
116. SA: LB/5/2/1438.
117. E.G.H. Kempson, 'A Shropshire Gild at Work in Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 57, no. 206 (July 1958), 20, states that the guild should have received 33s 4d, with a reduction for annual repairs, equating to 28s. Where this information comes from is unclear – the source is not cited. In the rental accounts of 1529/30, the guild received 10s 4d, and then 6s 4d in 1533/4. SA: LB/5/3/29, f. 7; LB/5/3/61.
118. The devising of land between members and the guild was common practice. Rachael Harkes, 'Building Success: Property Investment and Development in Ludlow', in *Fourteenth Century England*, vol. 13, ed. Gwilym Dodd and Helen Lacey (Woodbridge, 2025), 87–105.
119. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 177v.
120. SA: LB/5/1/2, mm. 1–2.
121. SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 1.
122. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 60r.
123. SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 3.
124. SA: LB/5/3/61. It may have continued later but the renter's accounts do not survive beyond 1534.
125. It is also an action undertaken by many widows: Rachael Harkes, 'Remembering the Dead: Postmortem Guild Membership in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 63, no. 2 (April 2024), 337.

126. SA: LB/2/1421.
127. SA: LB/2/1422. A confirmation of this transfer was drawn up and survives as LB/5/2/1423.
128. SA: LB/5/2/1450.
129. Richard Nassh's daughter also joined in 1503/4, and his wife in 1505–9. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 76r; LB/5/1/4, f. 4. For Thomas Walker's entry, see LB/5/3/5, 77r. The other two men could have been Palmers but no documentary evidence survives to determine their involvement with the guild beyond these transactions.
130. Land the Palmers owned in Eastham was worth £1 6s at their dissolution. Arthur Willis, *A Short Account of the Ludlow Palmer's Guild Estate* (Ludlow, 1845), 10.
131. SA: LB/5/2/1425.
132. SA: LB/5/2/1424.
133. SA: LB/5/2/1427. John Owens continued his active involvement with the guild well beyond this date. In 1524, the guild received 2s from John Owens for rent. A few years later, the stewards noted that Owens owed money for rent that was used to pay for Thomas Cook's chantry. SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 39r, 51r.
134. SA: LB/5/2/1428.
135. Christine Carpenter has likewise, on a much smaller scale, used guild deeds to suggest involvement by individual members in Stratford's Holy Cross guild. The gentry families who put their names to property transactions were involved in the guild. Carpenter, 'Town and Country', 71–3.
136. While there has been no major scholarship on Marlborough's religious guilds, we can assume that there was indeed at least a handful, thanks to Gervase Rosser's estimation of the number of parish guilds in late medieval England. The craft guilds possessed a social and religious element to their institutions, as discussed in: 'Salisbury: Merchant and Craft Guilds to 1612', in *A History of the County of Wiltshire*, vol. 6, ed. Elizabeth Crittall (London, 1962), 132–6.
137. There were eight guild members from Eastham and eighty-two from Marlborough. SA: LB/5/3/2–9; LB/5/1/1–4.
138. Many of these are detailed in the extensive collection of property deeds that survive in SA: LB/5/2 series, as well as in the rental rolls of the guild: SA: LB/5/3/46–71.
139. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 10v.
140. SA: LB/5/3/31, m. 2.
141. SA: LB/5/2/1017, 1043, 1080, 1088, 1096, 1345, 1358, 1426, 1432. Regional patterns of heriot practices are traced in Mark Bailey, *The Decline of Serfdom: From Bondage to Freedom* (Woodbridge, 2014), 289.
142. SA: LB/5/2/1426, 1432.
143. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 10v.
144. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 21v.
145. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 35v.
146. SA: LB/5/2/1431.
147. As the guild paid for a half gallon of wine to the court in both 1533/4 and 1538/9, it is possible that this was an annual expense, although the records do not survive to confirm this. SA: LB/5/2/31, mm. 3, 5; LB/5/3/32, m. 3.
148. SA: LB/5/3/32, mm. 3, 5.

149. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 214v. The nature of the indenture is unknown, with only a chance reference to it surviving in the membership receipt book.
150. SA: LB/5/3/32, m. 3; LB/5/3/33, m. 2.
151. SA: LB/5/3/32, m. 3.
152. SA: LB/5/3/33, m. 2.
153. SA: LB/5/3/34, m. 2.
154. SA: LB/5/3/33, m. 2.
155. SA: LB/5/2/1370.
156. SA: LB/5/3/71.
157. SA: LB/5/3/12. The receipt booklet is undated, but it can be dated to between 1514 and 1538, as Richard Vowell, prior of Walsingham, enrolled during that time.

Chapter 2

Households

In 1412, Joan, servant of one Thomas More, was entered into the register of admission of the Palmers' Guild, having completed paying the full admission fee.¹ She was the first of only three servants whose names were recorded in the registers in the ensuing decade. The frequency of servants rose considerably by the later part of the century, with the enrolment of thirteen individuals described as servants between 1485 and 1489.² Between 1505 and 1509, a further fourteen servants were entered into the registers: a small proportion of the 1,194 new members for those four years.³ The impression here is certainly not one of an overwhelming number of servants completing payments during these years, but these are only fragmentary runs of documents. The riding books, on the other hand, allow a more insightful investigation into *all* the individuals who began the process of membership, not just those who completed their payments. In contrast to the small number of servants found in the registers, there were rather over 500 individuals so described who undertook a relationship with the Palmers by committing their names and beginning payment. Yet it is not only the hundreds of servants that is striking, but also the simultaneous inclusion of masters and mistresses in the same records. Late medieval households consisted of a range of individuals of differing social statuses.⁴ This diversity of individuals, which was especially marked within large aristocratic households, is reflected in the Palmers' records. Gentlemen and gentlewomen, cooks and clerks were counted among the members of the Palmers' Guild. The guild provided a space where a household, as an *entity*, could join.

Across Wales and England, mercantile, gentry, noble and royal households all joined the Palmers' Guild. For example, the households of craftsmen, such as those of Thomas Tailor, shoemaker of Hereford, and

William Pilleston, joiner of Caernarvon, became part of the Ludlow guild.⁵ Gentry households, like that of Lady Newton of Pembroke, were frequent subscribers of household membership of the Palmers.⁶ The English crown was equally invested, as the enrolment of Edward IV's, Henry VII's and Henry VIII's households demonstrate, as well as the household of Arthur, Prince of Wales (d.1502).⁷ These socially wide-ranging households were also geographically diverse. In 1497, Jacob Streiteberell and two of his servants, John and Milo, joined the Palmers from Lancashire.⁸ William Brynley and his household, who began membership payments in 1500, joined from Ingoldsby, Lincolnshire.⁹ William Chapman's household of four joined the guild; just one example in a group of regular London household subscribers.¹⁰ The spread of household membership across a multitude of counties within England and Wales is reflective of more general membership patterns.

This chapter seeks to understand the types of households that joined; their characteristics, such as geographic locations, status and size in addition to the motivations and advantages of guild membership. Membership was spread within and between households through a series of social and personal connections, yet guild membership was, ultimately, an expression of public and private household piety. This chapter will begin with a discussion on why the medieval household joined and the resulting benefits. Then the practicalities of guild membership will be considered, including terminology and how guild membership intersected with the life cycle of medieval servants. The analysis will then proceed to the types of households that can be seen joining the guild, with a consideration of household structures, in order to contextualise the parameters within which these individuals were operating. Then the crux of the issue of *how* is explored, through a study of the importance of networks in heavily encouraging membership of households. Networks within a single household, such as the relationship between master and servant and between co-resident members of the household, were contributors to the drive on membership. Wider societal influences were equally weighty, especially for the nobility and gentry; the pressure to follow precedents set by the royal households, along with the influence of kin networks, were substantial in their own right.

Households and religious guilds

There is a marked lack of scholarly discussion on the topic of households within religious guilds.¹¹ The study of guild membership has almost solely concentrated on the status of individual members and the

subsequent effect on the reputation and role of the entire guild within society. Where family membership has been commented upon within guild historiography, it frames them in relation to social status.¹² For York's Corpus Christi guild, David Crouch discusses briefly the admittance of a small number of servants each year, from 1477 onwards, in relation to the prestige it added to the individual head of the relevant household within the guild itself. There were certainly instances of families joining Corpus Christi, for Crouch notes that 'family' memberships, in which children were included, usually cost 3s 6d yet he does not discuss this beyond providing a single example, nor does he engage with a discussion of family membership or the household.¹³ Examination of household membership within late medieval guilds is, therefore, long overdue.

Lynda Rollason's study of non-monastic entries in the Durham *Liber Vitae* provides a useful point of comparison for the appearance of families and households within other kinds of 'fraternal' associations. The *Liber Vitae* cannot be directly equated to a guild or fraternity register (as only a small number of those that were granted confraternity can be found recorded in the *Liber Vitae*) although there are similarities which warrant a comparison here between the Palmers and Rollason's analysis.¹⁴ Rollason notes that there was 'no real tradition of family association', and members of a household are rarely to be found in the *Liber Vitae*.¹⁵ Only two exceptions appear in the list of 1,688 non-monastic names: Bishop Louis de Beaumont and John of Gaunt, each with a list of their respective retainers.¹⁶ This is markedly different to the Palmers; the *Liber Vitae* shows the operation of the aristocratic affinity, within which the noble household was at the centre. These are the only two examples compared to the high number of households found in the Palmers' membership.

Benefits of membership

Before a detailed study of the spread of guild membership within and between households in late medieval England and Wales can commence, the first substantive question to consider is the reason why households, including masters, their families and their servants, might wish to enrol in the Palmers' Guild. Two interlocking motivations can be identified: piety and reputation. Both can similarly be ascribed to individual guild membership, but they take on a new significance in the context of the household. The Palmers provided a framework in which these two aims could be pursued by the heads of households across the social spectrum.

Late medieval religion was not circumscribed by the parish church but instead allowed room for individual preference in expressions of piety. Its range of expression, its 'voluntary' nature, and the depth of lay devotion have all been the focus of recent scholarship.¹⁷ In this instance, it pays to consider lay piety specifically within the framework of the household, and, additionally, to think about how household guild membership interacted with other forms of devotion. While several aspects of what follows have been subject to scholarly examination – for example, noble, gentry and mercantile piety – this work has largely been done in isolation,¹⁸ and it has already been noted that households have not featured in guild historiography at all, nor guilds in scholarship on households, despite the popularity of the topic over the past three decades. Fraternal membership has always been seen as a form of pious expression,¹⁹ but what did it mean for households specifically?

Before we consider guild membership as an expression of lay household piety, it is essential that we situate it within other types of devotion. The most immediate and universal encounter with religion was, arguably (although recognising the exceptions encompassed by 'unorthodox' expressions of religion),²⁰ at the level of the parish. Canonically, every Christian under the authority of the papacy belonged to a parish and was obliged to receive Mass and confess at least once a year. Parish churches, therefore, became foci for investment in various forms.²¹ Households were very much a part of this parochial existence; those who maintained them would attend church with their families, retainers and servants, often occupying a personal pew or chapel.²² Familial chapels could develop into mausolea, forming, essentially, an intergenerational representation of the household. Indeed, a typical example of this phenomenon is to be found in the church of St Michael and All Angels, Macclesfield, wherein numerous effigies and tombs of the Savage family (discussed in detail in the section 'The influence of networks II: the external pressures') reside.²³ Across the kingdom, parish churches could assume a symbolic mantle expressing 'local identity and family power' for many gentry families.²⁴ Wealthier individuals integrated themselves wholeheartedly and genuinely into the parish, spurred by a wider commemorative impulse and this involvement was not just an outward token of their status.²⁵

This is a view of the parish that emphasises integration – in terms of involvement and investment – especially on the part of those with wealth. Some historians have argued the opposite, citing family chapels and household oratories as evidence for a withdrawal from the parish, particularly in reference to the gentry.²⁶ The institution of chapels was transformative of both the physical and social household, and it seems likely that the household in its entirety would, at some level, have

gravitated towards it for certain expressions of devotion, which may have been communal and reinforced household relationships. Domestic chapels were common among the social groups from whom household membership of the Palmers was drawn. Naturally, a prerequisite was surplus capital in order to obtain an episcopal or papal licence, employ a chaplain, create a sanctified space and stock the chapel, and so they were ubiquitous among noble households from an early date. By the late fourteenth century, however, chapels or oratories were also prevalent among even minor gentry,²⁷ and elite townspeople increasingly sought to obtain them.²⁸ The household functioned 'as a spiritual unit as directed by its lay head',²⁹ and the maintenance of a domestic chapel and accompanying clergy was an expression of the 'good rule' of a household visible to every visitor. As such, its existence had parallels to the household membership of a guild like the Palmers, in which the centrality of the household was the basis of their piety. Households operated through joint religious acts: for example, the communal reading of devotional books and worshipping in chapels or designated rooms in the house with portable altars. The material culture of late medieval cities suggests a strong culture within the household.³⁰ In membership of a guild like the Palmers households retained an element of the independence of religious investment but directed that investment into an expression of religion that simultaneously benefited the household as a unit while supporting a larger religious community.

Other forms of religious expression had similar pertinence for the household. Religious houses, guilds, pardons and indulgences were obvious sources of investment for the laity. The situation was one of reciprocity, where additional spiritual benefits were a result of participation, and such investment was commonplace across society. In some cases, this interaction was purely financial, like the involvement of Humphrey Newton's household in his pardon-collecting habit.³¹ Others were more internal processes, such as devotional reading, which became exponentially popular and accessible throughout the late Middle Ages.³² Membership of the Palmers, in a way, was not out of the ordinary for households because it served as an extension of the operation of the household. Membership fit within the spiritual obligations of the householder to teach its inhabitants the Paternoster, Ave and Creed, as well as encourage spiritual observance.³³

Guild membership, therefore, must be understood within this wider household context, where devotion could be both parish-based or extra-parochial, and these were not at odds. The extent to which a household was genuinely 'pious' is often difficult to discern. Simply having a chapel with a daily Mass did not necessitate the attendance of members each day; the ideal and reality may have been very different. But we should not

dismiss the existence of genuine spiritual concerns. The Middle Ages are no longer seen as an age of 'blind faith', but devotion and belief were often genuinely and deeply felt.³⁴ The penitential system that underpinned the Catholic Church, with the notion of the 'third place' of Purgatory, encouraged the accumulation of *pro anima* prayers in order to expedite the journey to salvation.³⁵ The Palmers employed priests to perform divine service, which benefited both the living and the dead. There are obvious individual reasons, therefore, that a master might enrol himself and his family in a religious guild, but this line of thought can also be extended to those under his care. The concern, highlighted later in this chapter, for masters to finish the payments of dead servants suggests that the resulting benefits of these prayers were sought, and channelled, in a household context. The affective bonds within the household may have manifested in a genuine concern for the spiritual welfare of servants, who may not have had the means to access other forms of religiosity that came at a financial cost.

It was also beneficial for heads of household to display their own piety in a wider societal context and, more crucially, to assert and project the pious nature of their entire household. Religious expression could take the form of giving alms, and servants, on occasion, were permitted reimbursement from their master if they gave charitably.³⁶ The fulfilment of the duty of each household member to give alms was an extension of household charity,³⁷ and thus an outward form of piety, which constituted a fulfilment, and indeed an exceeding, of societal expectations. Naturally the more elaborate the donation, the more favourable the external perception. Guild membership had the same purpose. The social capital accrued through fraternal membership was advantageous for individuals alone, but this personal benefit was multiplied for masters joining with their servants. As with the distribution of alms, the perception of the servants performing a pious act reflected favourably on the master. There was, therefore, two aspects to the motivations for masters to encourage enrolment of their household in the Palmers' Guild. The first was internal, concerned with the welfare of the immortal soul. The second, on the other hand, was perceptibly external and constituted public acts that were witnessed by others. This theme is therefore inherently linked with another reason for household membership: the enhancement of the reputation of the household.

The medieval household was a microcosm of the body politic. As Philippa Maddern argued, the nation, cities and towns, and households could all be represented as the human body, with each respective head responsible for the obedience and order of all other parts of the metaphorical or physical polity.³⁸ Chris Given-Wilson has likewise argued that 'the magnificence of (the king's) domestic establishment was one of the

yardsticks by which his political authority was judged'.³⁹ Nowhere is this sentiment better encapsulated than when the 1485 parliament of Henry VII insisted that 'Your Honorable Household . . . must be kept and borne worshipfully and honorably, as it accordith to the honour of your estate and your said realme'.⁴⁰ A well-ordered household was the basis for order within the kingdom; disorder within the household would produce disruption elsewhere, rippling through society.⁴¹ The maintenance of discipline at every level within the household was a duty of the householder and anything less resulted in personal repercussions. In both urban and rural settings, the behaviour of servants outside of the home was the responsibility of the master and any misbehaviour might cause significant damage to his or her reputation.⁴² In a more intimate sense, should a servant marry without sanction, it could 'jeopardise the appearance of household rule that sustained civic identities of both householders and servants'.⁴³ Yet a household ruled wisely led to godly behaviour of those within the household.⁴⁴ Guild membership captured that relationship of godliness and social respectability that were entwined in late medieval domesticity; it was the epitome of encouraging godly behaviour within a house, providing an additional outlet for religious activity, while fulfilling a social obligation of orderliness. Guilds provided an additional layer of order that ensured that members adhered to a common standard of behaviour – not just at guild events but in their private lives.⁴⁵ Household holders not only demonstrated the respectability of their household with guild membership but it also reinforced good behaviour; it took the inward-facing establishment of order and respectable actions of the *familia* and presented it to the world outside of the household.

To become a 'brother' or 'sister' of a religious guild, ultimately, conferred a certain status and an identity, which mixed with pre-existing layers of identity and status: the statutes of guild membership that stated that members were to have a good reputation led to Gervase Rosser's assertion that 'social credit accrued to [a] member of a confraternity'.⁴⁶ Under closer examination, this ostensibly personal benefit appears also to have a secondary benefit for heads of households. 'Good housekeeping', along with control of the household through extensive management and a formal hierarchy, was key to preserving honour,⁴⁷ especially as the household as a whole formed a 'crucial element in the master's public image'.⁴⁸ The social capital accrued from guild membership was a route to circumvent and negate the damage that might arise from the bad reputation of members of the household, and was a measure to outwardly demonstrate the piety of the household in addition to partaking in exercises such as alms-giving and other charitable work that the guild undertook for those in need. Actions were catalysts for the creation or

altering of reputation, and the charitable actions of a guild towards individual members of the public, such as the poor or the sick, or more general charity, such as the repair of roads or building of bridges, had the effect of increasing the reputation of individual guild members.⁴⁹ For a noble such as Edward Stafford, whose household, as we will see, contained young men of elite social status, concern for his retinue's behaviour may have been a preoccupation and guild membership may have been an action of damage limitation to bolster perceptions of the morality of his household.

Moreover, the very materiality of joint membership of a guild and a domestic household was a clear demonstration of status and reputation; livery, which would have been worn at the guild's annual feast and perhaps other occasions such as important festivals, consisted of hoods and badges and were a visible sign of membership. How precisely the hoods of the Palmers' Guild would have been worn in tandem with a master's livery is not clear, but the visual imagery of both liveries together would have been a striking exhibition of household guild membership. In a similar manner, evidence from other great guilds suggests that the feast was also an opportunity for the enrolment of large numbers of people in a very public setting.⁵⁰ Attendance at the Holy Cross feast at Stratford ranged from 108 to 160 annually in the early fifteenth century, while Luton's Holy Trinity and Coventry's Holy Trinity guilds expected several hundred each year, and all of these were occasions for mass enrolment.⁵¹ Although the guild records suggest that most of the Palmers' enrolment took place outside Ludlow, it is not difficult to extend this line of thinking to suggest that the simultaneous enrolment of several members of a single household in one location would have been witnessed by a number of individuals, especially if a steward undertook his duties in a public area, such as a market place or another guild's hall.

The impact of guild membership was three-fold, positively influencing the status of the head of a household, the nuclear family and servants. The bestowment of respectability was even more important when servants were relatives of the master, and the kinship ties that sometimes existed between servants and a master increased the high stakes of maintaining control and reputation of a household. While guild membership could be a private act of piety, it was also highly public in certain contexts, and so it advertised the piety and subsequent reputation of an individual. The religious benefits, as well as social, were open to, and indeed sought after, by mercantile, gentle, noble and royal households. The internal and external factors that influenced household membership of the guild will be considered in due course, but first it is necessary to consider what membership looked like in the records and in practice.

Guild membership: terminology

At a fundamental level, the descriptor given to each person in the records of the guild is important to consider. The Palmers' use of the word servant to assign individuals an occupation presents obvious problems, as the term encompassed a range of different social and economic statuses. Within the gentry household, there was usually a clear distinction between the upper servants, who were household officers and included the likes of chamberlains, receivers, porters and cooks, and the lower servants taking on the role of grooms and labourers.⁵² 'Servants' could be gentle born, might hold property and might be local figures in their own right.⁵³ A glimpse of this range of household membership can be seen in a riding book which includes the enrolment of Edward IV's household. Gentleman, cook, groom, squire, gentleman usher and yeoman of the king's chamber were all terms assigned to members of the household.⁵⁴ Such specificity of household roles in guild documents is rarely seen subsequently. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the guild clerks switched to using servant liberally to describe almost anyone who occupied a role within the household, and it is only occasionally that an individual has a more specific role described in the riding books, and this is only ever in the households of princes or nobility.⁵⁵ As a result, the exact status of each household member is, for the most part, obscured. High-born sons who were part of Prince Arthur's household, such as Anthony Willoughby and John Harley, were described simply as servant.⁵⁶ While some extant documents from noble and gentry households can augment the guild records by allowing us to understand some individuals' positions within a household, the generic and frequent employment of the term servant means that we are often unable to construct a more accurate picture of the type of individual.⁵⁷

Likewise, despite the likelihood that most servants were unmarried, the descriptor of 'single' (man or woman), as found elsewhere in guild records, is never coupled with the descriptor 'servant'.⁵⁸ Rosemary Horrox, when discussing the enrolment of William Hopton with the Mercers' Company in 1475, argues that his guild entry, which describes him as an 'esquire with the Duke of Gloucester', categorically illustrates where the guild thought Compton's 'importance resided'.⁵⁹ The privileging of 'servant' suggests that a descriptor was assigned based on what was most prevalent in the minds of both individual and guild official at that moment of joining. The practicalities of locating individuals for invitation to future guild activities and repayment were prioritised by guild officers. It was enough to know to whom they were subordinate and therefore how to find them. The

use of one word to describe an individual can obscure the multifaceted nature of medieval identities and it should not be taken for granted that how they were described in the records is the only identity by which we can view them.⁶⁰

While the linguistic obscurity of servant hides the variation within, it simultaneously conceals their income – an especially important consideration when discussing a community for which to belong involved a financial obligation. The accessible nature of the Palmers' system of payment by instalment was a means to provide those unable to afford standard guild fees with access to a guild nonetheless. But the remuneration of household members was not straightforward. Usually, the recompense due for service came, at least in part, in the form of food, lodging and clothing – their immediate needs. A small cash wage was usually only presented quarterly or annually.⁶¹ However, one study has found that rural servants, considering that necessities were covered by the employer, were well paid by contemporary standards. The average wage calculated for 1495 was £1 5s (male) or 14s (female).⁶² Therefore, while it may be tempting to consider that all individuals listed as servants were people of little means, this may not have been the case. It is likely that there were considerable wage differentiations between various ranks of servants, and the overarching nature of this term must therefore be understood alongside servant wages of the period.⁶³ Gentlemen servants would have had a private income to support extra-household activities, as well as some form of income from their position. There was certainly a diversity among household members and within the ranks of the guild membership that can be obscured by the terminology used in guild records, complicating the process of studying patterns of membership.

Guild membership: patterns of household membership

The entry of a household into the Palmers could take many forms. Nuclear families (parents and their children) could join together, often taking up an entire folio of the riding book, listing each child's name individually. This particular practice is almost solely to be found with gentry families, like the Herberts of Troy (Monmouthshire), although smaller nuclear families joined together in some number (for example, John Lewes, his wife and daughter from Shrewsbury).⁶⁴ Merchants signed up their children less frequently, instead focusing on themselves and their wives. This difference

could be indicative of a number of things: fiscal restrictions, fewer children⁶⁵ and differing attitudes towards guild membership. A household could also enrol a steady (or haphazard) stream of masters and servants over a series of years. John Hadden of Coventry provides an insightful example. Hadden began his association with the Palmers not through his own enrolment but through that of his son in 1502/3.⁶⁶ That same year, one of Hadden's servants, John Meredith, became a member.⁶⁷ Hadden himself joined in 1505/6, paying his admission fee in one lump sum.⁶⁸ His servant Richard Phelipp, and Phelipp's wife, Margery, committed their names to the guild in the same year. Somewhat surprisingly, their names do not appear immediately after their master's. In fact they do not even appear on the same folio but are rather found two folios after his entry. This was similar to the situation when the first of Hadden's servants joined in the same year of his son; the servant John appears on the folio following Hadden's son, not the same one. This is unusual, as often members of the same household appear sequentially (if they have signed up in the same year).⁶⁹ The grouping of household members together was presumably simply a reflection of the order in which individuals joined up together, which suggests that Richard Phelipp signed up after his master did in 1505/6. Another servant in Hadden's household was William Veyll, who joined the guild in the year following his master and fellow servants.⁷⁰

The employment of servants necessitated a certain level of wealth, and prosperous urban centres were one place where such wealth existed. Mercantile classes had a propensity to maintain servants as much as the gentry and nobility,⁷¹ although it is hard to determine whether they were joining with all of their servants, or just a select few, for household accounts rarely survive. We might take Coventry as a typical example, where a large number of merchant and artisan households maintained servants. Bailey Lane, situated in the heart of Coventry, with St Mary's Hall on the south side and St Michael's parish church on the north, was particularly known for its prosperity, and many merchants and goldsmiths lived there. The 1377 poll tax returns for Bailey Lane showed that over eighty-three per cent of households kept servants within their household, with a mean number of 2.8 servants per household – slightly above Coventry's average as a whole.⁷² By 1523, the number of Bailey Lane households with servants had dropped to sixty-seven per cent, although this was still a substantial majority.⁷³ Coventry was a significant contributor towards membership of the Palmers – certainly in individual membership but also in household membership.⁷⁴ These merchant households were frequent members, with some specifically from Bailey Lane. John Devell, a mercer of Bailey Lane, joined the Palmers in 1499/1500.⁷⁵ Three years later his wife Elisabeth joined, as did one of their servants, Margery Gelllett.⁷⁶ Three more of Devell's

servants joined the Palmers in 1505/6 and 1507/8.⁷⁷ Although it is impossible to say whether or not the tenure of Devell's servants overlapped, this suggests that this household was among the average size for Coventry. None of the servants paid for more than one year so it is unclear from the records if they continued in Devell's service, or if new servants were becoming Palmers as they joined the household.

Furthermore, it was possible for members of the household to join without their masters at all. For example, Richard Lee of Quorn (Leicestershire) left no trace of joining the Palmers but his son, Robert, joined in 1489 along with two of Richard's servants.⁷⁸ All three individuals completed payments and were enrolled on the formal registers of the guild. Three servants of John Lenche of Birmingham joined in 1506/7, without their master.⁷⁹ Similarly, four servants from the same Coventry household of an elusive individual known only in the guild riding books as 'Master Symondes' joined the Palmers in 1504/5 and 1506/7.⁸⁰ A fellow Coventry individual, 'Master' Thomas Banbrocke, cannot be found in the Palmers' documents yet three of his female servants joined in 1504/5, 1506/7 and 1507/8.⁸¹ It therefore appears that structure of the household encouraged individuals to join the guild even when the head of the household was not a member, perhaps revealing the functioning of smaller communities within the household.

Households could also include those clergy who staffed the domestic chapels that were a mainstay of mercantile and gentry households.⁸² Household chapels were looked after by the clergy through a variety of means; stipendiary employment of chaplains, beneficed chaplains, local regular clergy and parish priests were all options for the household.⁸³ Great households frequently had a group of chaplains and a choir, like those employed by Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, while lesser elite households usually had at least one chaplain.⁸⁴ It might be assumed that the prevalence of household chapels would have resulted in a preponderance of chaplains among the scores of other household servants who joined the Palmers, but, surprisingly, this not the case. On the whole, clergy were present in force among the Palmers' membership: over 500 names of those belonging to the secular clergy can be found throughout the riding books and admission registers.⁸⁵ However, only eleven of these individuals had a master or mistress written alongside their respective entries in the guild registers. Six of those masters were members of the Council of the Marches: four named Prince Arthur as their master, one the Lord President of the Council, and the other the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield.⁸⁶ Other household chaplains who joined the Palmers were those employed by Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, George Grey, Earl of Kent, and Sir John Savage (of

Hanley, Worcestershire).⁸⁷ Similarly, both Richard Mayhew, bishop of Hereford, and his chaplain, John Longland, were members.⁸⁸ Yet that each of the chaplains assigned to a household can be listed here highlights the rarity of household chaplains within the Palmers' guild records, especially given the number of nobility within the guild's community. But those eleven household chaplains that were Palmers possess a common denominator: they were employed by those who were politically active in the Welsh Marches. Margaret Pole and John Savage governed areas of the Marches through land ownership; George Grey, as discussed earlier, was associated with Arthur, Prince of Wales; the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield went on to become the president of the Council of the Marches (after 1514); and Richard Mayhew sat on commissions of the peace in border counties.⁸⁹ Governance of the region influenced the composition of the guild's membership. The relationship between governing the Marches and the Palmers' Guild, wherein membership was expected – which is discussed in detail in [Chapter 4](#) – was extended to influence the enrolment of households.

Life cycle

The existence of servants in guild records is perhaps the most visible indicator of household membership. Multiple pressures were incumbent upon servants: their relationship with their master; their financial situation; and their stage in the 'life cycle' – and all of these undoubtedly affected their relationship with the Palmers' Guild.

The traditional life cycle for servants after leaving the natal family is characterised as follows: first service, then marriage, and potentially employing servants in return. The cyclical nature emphasises the very fact that servants were not part of a 'class' but rather at a certain stage in their life.⁹⁰ For many, this stage was transient, which may explain many servants' lack of completed guild payments.⁹¹ Of the 530 individuals who were given the descriptor servant, only 104 of them completed the required entrance fee – just over nineteen per cent.⁹²

Apprentices represent one group of servants for whom that role was only temporary. As very few servants had a second descriptor included in their guild entry, it can be challenging to identify apprentices. However, three of the individuals were described with an occupation followed by servant: Thomas White was a 'grocer servant' of Master Marler of Coventry, Edward Jannes, 'merchant servant' to Mistress Penk of Bristol and Richard Wilkins, 'miller servant' to Thomas Fowkner of Westbury.⁹³ The elasticity of the term 'servant' in the middle ages allowed scribes – and by

extensions, institutions – to use the term for journeymen as well as apprentices, particularly when a journeyman was living in his master's house.⁹⁴ It was a more frequent occurrence, in the Palmers' Guild, for an apprentice or journeyman to be described as a servant without any occupational descriptor, like Robert Packington's enrolment while apprenticed to the mercer Simon Rice of London.⁹⁵ Poll tax returns and legal records often assign individuals the descriptor 'servant' to individuals even if they are apprentices – in fact, the term apprentice rarely appears outside of craft guild ordinances, borough records and wills – because the concern was the identification of a relationship between an individual and an employee.⁹⁶ By exploring external evidence, however, it is possible to suggest a master–apprentice relationship in cases where it is not immediately obvious from the guild's record-keeping. For example, Peter Abirdyng, servant of Hugo Elyot, merchant of Bristol, joined the Palmers in 1499/1500. The guild received one hoggeshead of wine in payment for his fee, and the stewards noted that his name was to be written into the guild register, indicating that the membership debt had been fulfilled.⁹⁷ Abirdyng's status as a particular type of servant was, like most of the servants in the guild registers, not expanded upon, but the payments in kind might suggest that he was an apprentice to a wine merchant. A litigation case in the Court of Chancery from between 1515 and 1518 details Elyot's involvement in the wine trade.⁹⁸ Elyot was involved in the North Atlantic trade and exploration expeditions, providing and fitting ships for multiple North Atlantic voyages in the first decade of the sixteenth century.⁹⁹

The relationship between the master and apprentice (or journeyman) was an important one in the flow of membership. The influence of masters upon younger members of the artisan and mercantile communities is well illustrated. William Rowley, mayor of Coventry in 1492 (and again briefly in 1496 due to the ill-timed death of the incumbent, John Dove), became a Palmer in 1499/1500.¹⁰⁰ In his professional life he was a draper and, naturally, took on apprentices to train and it appears his influence stretched beyond the shop. Two of his apprentices, William Ruddyng and Thomas Waren, went on to assume a role in civic governance.¹⁰¹ While apprenticed to Rowley, these two young men also became Palmers – six years after their master.¹⁰² They were evidently learning from their professional master and their 'elder' in civic politics. There may have been an awareness among these up-and-coming young mercantile elites that not only were they expected to join their leading local fraternities – Corpus Christi first and then Holy Trinity, as will be discussed in the following chapter – but also that they needed to join a fraternity outside Coventry: the Palmers. The joining of a religious guild in this way may well have been

an instance of what is known as 'ordinary theology' – a view developed by Jeff Astley which argues that Christian belief and actions are shaped throughout the experiences of life, new ideas and environments encountered by an individual.¹⁰³ For the medieval period, a study of fifteenth-century Norfolk wills conducted by Louisa Foroughi argues that an individual's pious outlook was largely determined by shared experiences of religion, often influenced by upbringing, which dictated the elements of pious practice that formed part of their religious experience – such as devotions to particular saints or attachment to particular guilds.¹⁰⁴ Membership of the Palmers was one expression of 'ordinary theology' in action, wherein members of the household were expected to follow the example of the head of the household. The influence of a master in impressing their notions of the religious and social importance of guild membership onto apprentices, moreover, permeated further, manifesting itself in every relationship of the household. For apprentices, this influence may have been temporary, until they completed their apprenticeship and set up their own household, but it began a relationship with the guild that an apprentice could choose to continue after they had left service.

While, for some, service was one stage of life in late medieval England, there may also have been several gradations within this stage. Movement and changes in employment can be witnessed in the Palmers' records, and so it repays to consider how these factored into guild membership. Servants were usually engaged in service for months or perhaps up to a year at a time.¹⁰⁵ Hiring fairs, taking place around certain feast days according to local customs, provided opportunities for servants to find employment.¹⁰⁶ Movement from one household to another was certainly beneficial for servants, allowing them to move up the hierarchy by taking on new responsibilities.¹⁰⁷ The movement of servants on a potentially regular basis could explain the frequency of uncompleted membership fees. Indeed, there was certainly a large proportion of servants who only contributed one payment.¹⁰⁸ This trend is suggestive of two things. First, and most practically, it is likely that these individuals moved on to service in a different household, acting in accordance with the prevalence of single-year service contracts. More pertinently, however, for the understanding of household guild membership, it is also indicative of the employer's influence among their dependants. A single payment might suggest that dedication to the Palmers was fleeting and that it was perhaps not a pressing concern for the new employer. This observation firmly places the initial enrolment of servants, for the most part, in the hands of their masters.

This being said, the potential agency of servants ought not to be forgotten or overlooked. Due to the nature of surviving source material, this

agency can be viewed only through financial commitment towards the guild. We are therefore not privy to personal opinions or attitudes and can only discern commitment at the most basic level by determining whether membership payments were continued over time. If employment in a household was terminated, there was nothing stopping a servant from continuing his or her payments. Thomas Selby, servant of Thomas Chapman of Bristol, entered the Palmers in 1505/6.¹⁰⁹ A later marginal inscription notes 'Coventry', suggesting that Selby had moved and there may have been a change in Selby's household service. There was certainly a change in residency, but the guild was able to seek out Selby to complete his payments. It is impossible to identify when the stewards noted Selby's move to Coventry, but it is safe to assume that it was during the ten-year period he took to complete paying his 6s 8d fine. The riding books had an overt practical purpose and were used to locate and record individuals with their respective payments. There would be no need to note that he was in Coventry if he had already finished payments, for his name would have been written in the registers of admission. As such, Selby's continued payments illustrate not only a continued level of commitment – a decade of annual 8d payments was more fiscal dedication than many Palmers showed – but a desire to remain part of the guild even when he had left the original location where he had joined. But this is not the only example of such a phenomenon. Agnes Downe, a servant of Roger Amore, initially joined the Palmers in Derby but later moved to London, where she continued payment.¹¹⁰ William Coke, a servant of William Moklow of Wigmore, moved to Gloucester at some point after his initial enrolment in the Palmers in 1498/9.¹¹¹ Again, like Selby, Coke's relocation did not affect his dedication to the guild: he finished paying his 6s 8d fee in 1507/8. What is unclear about these servants and their subsequent moves is whether the individuals themselves were moving to another city independently – to join another household or to start their own – or whether the master's household was moving. In all three instances, the masters' names do not appear in the surviving guild records, therefore leaving us none the wiser as to whether the whole household also changed location. However, it is probable that in at least some of these cases, servants chose to continue their guild payments while working in more than one household, exercising their own agency.

Servants had access to new jobs outside hiring fairs, and these could be pursued through a number of different routes. The most well-documented opportunity was through kin employed in a different household.¹¹² Another route to service within the household was through kinship with the head of a household. Kinship connections between servants and employers highlight the existence of the emotional bonds possible between household

members, despite the power dynamic of a relationship that necessitated one party holding power over the other. Provisions might be made for the employment of poor family members, should they be willing to work as servants within the household.¹¹³ It has been suggested, albeit with strong caution, that servants possessing the same surname as their employer were related and that this can be used justifiably in the absence of alternative sources.¹¹⁴ Due to limited sources of information about many members of the Palmers' Guild, we could suggest the involvement of kin servants was present in guild membership. For example, Joan Nevell, servant of Richard Nevell of Aconbury, Herefordshire, joined in 1515/16.¹¹⁵ Richard Nevell of Herefordshire, who joined the Palmers in 1503/4, may have been her master, although not enough evidence can be gathered to say this with any confidence.¹¹⁶ Another servant within the Palmers, John Milward, similarly possessed the same surname as his employer, Alice Milward of Ludlow.¹¹⁷

Based on the names of individuals within the household of Margery Adene of Hereford, it might be that Katherine and Elizabeth Higgons found employment through family connection. Katherine joined the Palmers in 1503/4 and, two years later, so did Elizabeth, while they were both in the service of Margery.¹¹⁸ If their enrolment dates are anything to go by, it may have been that Katherine was employed first and suggested the service of her kin Elizabeth. Such connections may have worked to influence guild membership too. Like the previous examples of continued fiscal investment in guild membership, Katherine paid her membership fee in sixteen annual instalments ranging from 4d to 8d. Was it possible that Katherine was in service to Margery for those sixteen years? There was no correction or change in her initial entry in the riding books. Longer periods of service in the same household, ranging from two to seven years, have been found to occur in Yorkshire, although sixteen years exceeds even this significantly.¹¹⁹

The next stage in the 'life cycle' was the setting up of one's own house which, financial circumstances permitting, did not mean that membership payments could not be fulfilled. The life cycle of servanthood had largely been discussed with the view that most individuals were engaged in service prior to marriage.¹²⁰ 'Life cycle service' encompassed the period of time from adolescence until marriage – in essence, the time when most people did not possess their own household. Few, if any, of the lower servants of the household would have married while in service, and when they left service they would have hoped to marry, having accumulated wealth and skills as they came of age in service.¹²¹ The movement of household individuals from a serving position to an attachment of a husband can only be viewed within the Palmers' records on occasion. Isabella

Attouneleff, servant of Thomas Banbrocke of Coventry, joined the Palmers in 1505/6. A scribble in the margin informs the steward that she could now be located with her husband, who joined in 1507/8.¹²² Annyng Maynwring, servant of Thomas Pontesbury of Battlefield (Shropshire), made a single payment of 4d before a note was written beside her name, stating that she could be found with her husband, Richard Twisse, in the book of new recruits for 1516/17.¹²³ Their new location was Myddle, about seven miles north of Battlefield.

Guild membership could also assist with the transition between service and marriage. Both female and male servants were among the guild brethren, yet only 132 of the 530 servants in the Palmers' guild were female, placing them firmly in the gendered minority of their occupational group represented in the guild.¹²⁴ This is perhaps surprising, as Jeremy Goldberg's research found that women outnumbered men in towns and constituted a relatively high proportion of servants, but it may be explained by the gentry and noble tendency to employ men over women.¹²⁵ The employers of these female servants, however, align with wider occupational trends – female servants were more common among employers involved with textile and mercantile trades.¹²⁶ The under-representation of female servants within guild membership can be explained by the fact that relatively few female servants remained in service beyond their mid-twenties, after which came marriage.¹²⁷

The single status of female servants means that there was an added reason to join a religious guild, as guilds sometimes provided dowries. So-called 'maidens' guilds' existed primarily for the purpose of providing comfort and support for young, unmarried women, particularly servants.¹²⁸ For mixed-sex guilds, dowry provisions do appear to have been common in the guild returns of 1389 – but this has not prevented the assumption that they were nevertheless a widespread aspect of guild charity.¹²⁹ In fact, there are only two known examples: the Palmers and a guild in Berwick-upon-Tweed.¹³⁰ The guild of St Mary's, Kingston-upon-Hull, made provisions for a loan of 10s. to impoverished unmarried women but it is not explicit that this was to be used for dowry provisions.¹³¹ The Palmers' ordinances, as recorded in the 1389 guild returns, pledged:

If any good girl of the gild, of marriageable age, cannot have the means found by her father, either to go into a religious house or marry, whichever she wishes to do; friendly and right help shall be given her, out of our means and our common chest, towards enabling her to do whichever of the two she wishes.¹³²

If most female servants were unmarried, as has generally been concluded, then the Palmers might have seemed especially attractive to

females in service.¹³³ While the exact wages given to servants is debated, it is likely that the degree to which a servant might save for marriage was limited – especially for female servants who were paid significantly less than their male counterparts.¹³⁴ The assistance with a dowry would certainly have been appealing to some female servants; if not the reason for their enrolment, it may have been an attractive motivation to continue contributing to their membership fee once they had left the employment of the master who had encouraged them to become a Palmer.¹³⁵ For the nineteen female servants from Coventry, the two major guilds there (Corpus Christi and Holy Trinity) did not have provisions for a dowry.¹³⁶ Of course, the incomplete nature of the surviving accounts for the Palmers' Guild, however, makes it difficult to verify the extent to which the ordinances were fulfilled and such charity provided, or whether the ordinances were aspirational or influenced by the political circumstances of their creation in 1389.¹³⁷ Surviving accounts provide some examples of female members receiving charity, but the circumstances of their need is not detailed.¹³⁸ Regardless of the extent of the realization of this particular avenue of guild charity, it was, as Ben McRee has argued, one arm in a larger strategy of charity that included almsgiving, hospitals and schools.¹³⁹ While the reality of how much, if any, money from the guild chest was given to single women in need is not known, we should not discount the possibility of the guild's ordinances influencing decisions to join.

The ultimate stage of any life cycle is, of course, death, and this finality is borne out in some detail in the membership records of the Palmers' Guild. Like much of the preceding and proceeding discussion, an investigation into deceased servants raises questions about the involvement of other parties (notably the master), about what it meant to be a guild member and about the level of commitment to the guild. As mentioned, just over nineteen per cent of those described as servants completed the required entrance fee.¹⁴⁰ Twenty-nine of the 104 who completed the entrance fee were deceased when they eventually became full members, begging the question of who paid for their membership fee. Jennet ap Owen of Wiston (Pembrokeshire) initially joined the Palmers in 1503/4.¹⁴¹ Following standard practice, '6s 8d' was written beside his name, indicating the sum to pay. However, the sum was then crossed out and '3s 4d' was written above, which was subsequently paid under Richard Bargott's stewardship in 1505. The change in admission fee and the delayed payment suggest that Jennet ap Owen had died after initial enrolment to the guild under Cheyne and Hocke's stewardship in 1503/4. Jennet ap Owen's master, John Wogan, was himself a Palmer, as were a number of others in his household.¹⁴² It seems reasonable to infer that Wogan completed Jennet ap Owen's payments post-mortem.

Enrolment after death was not uncommon in the guild; 700 people overall are recorded as deceased, totalling just over 4 per cent (4.09 per cent) of the known brethren of the guild. It appears that there was a determination, on the part of the laity, to ensure deceased servants were placed on the register of admission: only four such examples were not entered. This equates to ninety per cent of deceased servants within the guild being fully-fledged members. This trend is certainly striking compared to both the low percentage of living servants who completed payments (nineteen per cent) and the overall membership completion (from eighteen per cent to thirty-three per cent per annum). The nature of some of the records, namely the clerk's receipt books, means that it is not possible to identify if some of the deceased individuals had their payments completed: these recorded single payments, and it was only after consulting the appropriate riding book that a steward would know whether the individual had paid the full amount. Therefore, there is a total of 617 deceased Palmers for whom we can definitively discern whether or not they completed payments and were entered in the registers. Of this group, the full fee was paid for 436 individuals, meaning that 181 deceased members were definitively not entered in the guild registers. It is interesting to note that the majority of deceased members did have their fees fully paid (seventy-one per cent) while, overall, the completion of payments was much lower.¹⁴³ But the tendency of deceased servants to have fees fully paid therefore significantly exceeds even this trend – ninety per cent compared to seventy-one per cent. For the dead, then, despite the obvious issue of being unable to personally complete their membership fee, their high rate of admission is in contrast to the membership trends of their living counterparts who were engaged in service *and* to the more general enrolment of the dead. Several reasons may be posited for this discrepancy. If we assume, as has been suggested, that servant involvement in the guild was often done at the instigation of the master (hence the prevalence of single-year payments in line with single-year contracts) then we might infer that it was the master who continued post-mortem payments for their servants. Such a suggestion would account for the disproportionately high percentage of deceased servants. This might have been done out of a sense of spiritual obligation. Although the relationship between masters and servants was one based on subordination, this carried with it certain duties: provision of sustenance, clothing, payment, welfare, and so on. This could feasibly extend beyond death, when spiritual care was most pressing.¹⁴⁴ Servants were unlikely to afford chantries or annual obits for their souls, and so the corporate spiritual care of the guild seems like an obvious draw, and masters may have considered this within their purview of care. Stratford's Guild of the Holy Cross also included the souls of servants.¹⁴⁵

Richard Bromley enrolled his two children and one of his servants into the Stratford guild; so, too, did the incoming master, Adrian Quyny, alongside his deceased relatives in 1515.¹⁴⁶ In these instances, the deceased members benefitted only from *pro anima* prayers of the guild priests; the social-minded activities of the guild were, of course, irrelevant to departed brethren. It was, therefore, imperative that the fees of the deceased brethren were settled by their master or kin. Through their life cycle, servants played an important role in the household, and this also brought them into contact with the guild. Whether they joined through the influence of their master and paid only one year of fees, or became lifelong guild members as they moved through different households and roles, their membership of the guild played a role in the community, reputation and piety of the wider household.

The influence of networks I: insular pressures

The proliferation and wide use of the term ‘servant’ in guild records, discussed earlier, highlights that the medieval understanding of service involved an aspect of mutual obligation.¹⁴⁷ Service in merchant and gentry households often demanded co-residency and the close proximity between master and servant naturally developed an avenue for influence to run through the relationship each way. We have already briefly touched upon the guiding hand of the master in servants’ guild membership – as, for example, in single-year contracts – but it is now time to explore this theme in more detail. What were the internal mechanisms that increased household guild membership, and how far can we see them in the enrolment of names in the Palmers’ Guild? The influence of both the master and other members of the household in fostering membership must be considered in order to answer this question.

The payment of guild membership for servants by masters and mistresses was not a form of financial obligation enforced by the guild, given that there was no penalty for non-payment. It was instead an expression of the bonds formed between the head and servant of a household. Part of the mutual care within this relationship was spiritual. As discussed earlier, the spiritual care of the household was under the purview of the master or mistress and the payment of guild membership was a concrete way for masters to fulfil that obligation as well as exert their own extra-parochial preferences.¹⁴⁸ He or she was, after all, the ultimate authority within this domestic framework. While chapels were a standard forum of religious activity within the gentry and noble household,¹⁴⁹ more personalised forms of spiritual dedication were also prevalent throughout late medieval

society. For example, Sir Humphrey Newton of Cheshire was a keen collector of pardons and accumulated half a million years' worth.¹⁵⁰ This interest was then reflected in the actions of his household, demonstrated by a payment of 1d to a nurse named Kathryn to allow her to purchase a pardon of the friary of St John.¹⁵¹ If this pardon was intended as a gift to Kathryn, then Newton's sponsorship in this regard – albeit a small sum – demonstrates the influence that an employer could have on the extra-parochial religious activities of those in his employment. This accumulation of pardons was extra-parochial, and guild membership can also be characterised as such, as demonstrated through the enrolment (and sometimes payment on their behalf) of multiple members of a household alongside a master or mistress. While some masters preferred to express their extra-parochial interests through pardons or chapels, others used guild membership.

The relationship between a master and servant in late medieval England therefore went beyond a transactional relationship of dues and payment for services rendered. The household was a functioning unit which frequently led to meaningful relationships between masters and servants. Upon the death of a master, normal practice dictated that the service of an individual was not forgotten, nor were household servants left without provision. Care was usually taken to ensure the employment of servants for a period of time (usually up to six months) after the death of the master, and, beyond that, servants were commonly remembered in employer's wills, often in the form of bequests of clothing.¹⁵² In 1519, for example, the Palmer John Hadden of Coventry bequeathed 'to every man servant in my house ablack gowne and xx s. in money'.¹⁵³ Female servants were likewise bequeathed a black gown, but only 8s 6d in money.¹⁵⁴ Monetary bequests were also common but not usually substantial, and so Hadden's case is noteworthy.¹⁵⁵ He arguably had a more significant association with the Palmers than many members, with the enrolment of his immediate family and servants, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The bequest of black gowns to Hadden's servants came with obligations of their own, as they were probably expected to participate in his funeral and commemorative services, wearing the black gowns in mourning.¹⁵⁶ The bequest of money, by contrast, was an act of benevolence towards individuals who had been an integral part of his *familia*. William Veyll, his fellow Palmer and servant, was remembered with a more specific bequest: 'Also to william vele that was my servant hys duete he owith me is x li which I forgyve hym'.¹⁵⁷ While Veyll was no longer part of Hadden's household, he was still remembered in Hadden's will. The forgiveness of debt was part of a common discourse of late medieval will-making, but the absolving of a debt of a former servant was an act that underlined the recipient's role as an

extension of the *familia* even after they had left.¹⁵⁸ It is this persistent attention to his servants' well-being, on the part of Hadden, that underscores the very nature of his household – one where servants are enveloped within the same sphere as the immediate family – which is also typified in the remarkable enrolment of Hadden himself, his natal family and several servants in the Palmers. Hadden's bountiful and numerous bequests to both pious and secular recipients is testament to his wealth, and £10, while a substantial sum, was evidently not a crippling debt for Hadden to forgive. Bequests to servants by their employers shows that the master–servant relationship was not purely exploitative.¹⁵⁹ As Kermode's study of the Yorkshire towns of Beverley, Hull and York demonstrates, some fifteen to twenty-six per cent of wills mention servants receiving small gifts of cash, meaning this trend was common enough.¹⁶⁰ Forgiveness of Veyll's debt by Hadden was, in part, a demonstration of financial care administered by a master (while also undoubtedly a proactive action to ease Hadden's reckoning at the Last Judgement), while the spiritual duty of care implicit in a master–servant relationship was enacted through household enrolment in the Palmers' Guild.

The relationships created by virtue of being head of a household – both with servants and family members – could take the form of fiscal responsibility. There may therefore have been many occasions in which a master or mistress were responsible for a servant's entry into the Palmers. On occasion, this is clear. For example, when Elisabeth Arnald, a widow from Westbury (Wiltshire), joined the Palmers in 1505/6, she enrolled (and paid for) the deceased John Arnald at the same time. It is likely that this man was her husband, although he is not described as such. Elisabeth did not just pay for her and John's membership; she paid for the membership of one of John's servants, William, at the same time.¹⁶¹ This is one of the few times when it is explicitly stated that a mistress took charge of a household member's debt to the guild. A small number of servants remained in service to their master's widow for a number of years after a master's death.¹⁶² Elisabeth's payment for her deceased husband's servant suggests that William was indeed carrying on a role within the same household. That guild membership was the form of spiritual care she chose to encourage within their household was also a reflection of Elisabeth's interests in extra-parochial activities. William's membership was a result of Elisabeth's interests and the completion of William's membership fee a fulfilment of an obligation. This trend was not isolated to the Ludlow guild; in York, William Snawsell, former Lord Mayor, and William Chymney, former Chamberlain (and Lord Mayor in 1486) introduced two and four servants of their household respectively into the Corpus Christi Guild and appear to have paid their fees.¹⁶³ It is worth noting that only 6d was charged for a

servant's entrance into the Corpus Christi guild, and a fee of 3s 6d for 'family' memberships which would include children – significantly lower fees than that which individuals and households of the Palmers paid.¹⁶⁴

It is almost certain that there are other instances of heads of household paying the membership fees for their subordinates despite not being explicitly mentioned. One way to deduce the encouragement of household membership is through a study of the practicalities of payments. The most common method by which servants paid their membership was in coin. However, there are a few examples of servants' fines being paid in goods, as seen previously with potential apprentices. To return to the example of Hugh Elyot, merchant of Bristol, and his apprentice Peter Abirdyng, we have already seen that the guild received wine in payment for his fee.¹⁶⁵ Elyot's wife, Alice, joined the guild in the same year and gave exactly the same payment.¹⁶⁶ The payment of a hoggeshead of wine, therefore, is an example of the head of the household's occupation being revealed through membership payments. Guild fees in wine were not wholly unusual, with a small proportion of Bristol merchants paying in this manner – a signpost to their commercial interests – but the wine paid by Alice and Peter reveals that Elyot was the facilitator.¹⁶⁷ If a master, or husband, was controlling payments, as suggested in this example, it seems likely that he both approved of, and perhaps orchestrated, the membership of other people in his household.

There was an extraordinary number of individuals who did not complete their membership payments to the guild. The Palmers did not have a system of penalisation for those who did not pay their fines – this was the case both in an overall sense, such as completing the entire fine, and in an annual sense, for many individuals missed a year or two of payment before resuming. There is certainly no documentary evidence of their pursuit of individuals who did not complete their fines. The acts of masters and mistresses paying for servants were not a form of financial obligation enforced by the guild: it was an expression of the bonds formed between the head and servant of a household. Part of the mutual care within this relationship was the spiritual. The spiritual care of the household was under the purview of the master or mistress and the payment of guild membership was a very concrete way for masters to fulfil that obligation as well as exert their own extra-parochial preferences.

The close-knit nature of some gentry households influenced actions of both servants and masters. The affective and economic bonds of the household tied individuals together in such a way that membership of the entire household must be considered, rather than simply the individuals whose names appear on the membership records. In 1520/1, Rees Griffith, son and heir of William Griffith (knight and chamberlain of North

Wales) joined the Palmers along with his sister Elisabeth. On the same folio a further seven members are noted from the household of William Griffith.¹⁶⁸ The females of the house, Ellyn, the wife of Morgan Gittowe, and Kateryne Ludlow (daughter of Laurence Ludlow) were described as 'with my lady Griffith'. Alice Adams, however, was described as 'servant with my lady Griffith'. Walter, Robert and John were likewise described as servants with 'Sir Griffith, knight' (clarifying that their service was not to Rees Griffith, but to his father William). The final individual, William ap Rees, was described as 'beyng with Sir Griffith', again suggesting that his service was less of a traditional servant and more likely to be of some gentle birth. In many cases, it is apparent that there existed a certain friendship between gentry servants and their masters, undoubtedly fostered through a reciprocal relationship and mutual support.¹⁶⁹ Guild membership was certainly prolific among this Welsh gentry family and its household. The influence of the Griffith family can be detected, just as can be found in countless examples of gentry, noble and merchant masters, in the enrolment of significant numbers of their household. The household, as a unit, was regularly acting in an extra-parochial manner to such an extent that they joined not their local parish guild, but a guild based outside their local place of worship. Unfortunately, no further guild membership records survive past 1521, leaving us none the wiser as to whether members of the Griffith household demonstrated their financial dedication to the guild through the completion of their fee.

It is clear that masters had an interest in disseminating guild membership through their household for both pious and reputational reasons, but the impetus for the enrolment of so many members of the household should not be put solely on the shoulders of the head of the household. While emphasis has repeatedly been placed on the notion that, given the inconsistency of document survival, the absence of a master's name does not preclude his own enrolment in the Palmers, in some cases it may have been that the master did not in fact enrol. Membership may have been, in some households, a servant initiative intended to support the piety or sense of community of a smaller group within the household. Guild membership permeated household life through *all* layers, and bonds certainly existed between servants within the house. The enrolment of household members in successive years is suggestive of the power of proximity of other guild members. As mentioned, three female servants of Thomas Banbrocke joined the Palmers, one after each other in 1504/5, 1506/7 and 1507/8. Johanna Osbern and Elisabeth Jeffreys, servants to John Devell of Coventry, joined the Palmers in 1505/6 and another servant from the same household, Alice Wylde, joined two years later.¹⁷⁰ The initial enrolment of a servant of Richard Norbery in 1498/9 may have led to the enrolment of another

household servant, John Nekson, the following year.¹⁷¹ The household of one Master Symondes of Coventry was a substantial presence in the guild records, with four servants of his household joining. Two women joined in 1504/5 and another two joined in 1506/7.¹⁷² It was certainly not only urban households that follow this trend: gentry households in rural areas display similar patterns. Four servants from the household of Sir John Wogan of Wiston (Pembrokeshire) signed up in 1503/4 and another two the following year.¹⁷³ The introduction of new servants in successive years from the same household undeniably expresses a continued interest in the Palmers.

Membership of the Palmers may have created a sense of community across the entire household. While numbers alone do not always imply significance, the prominence of servants and their masters in the guild suggests the strength of ties within the household. We might suspect that active involvement with the Palmers was difficult for members who lived some hundreds of miles away from Ludlow. But the household was one way to make membership of the Palmers a communal experience. For Sir John Wogan, collective membership among twelve of his household enabled them to create their own community of Palmers in rural Pembrokeshire. His wife Anna, three of their children and seven servants all committed their names to become Palmers between 1504 and 1506.¹⁷⁴ As country gentry, they were less likely to come into frequent coincidental contact with other Palmers than their fellow guild members in towns. John Wogan and his household created their own microcosm of the guild. These household microcosms were self-replicating and helped encourage membership, which was in turn encouraged by the genuine affective bonds or those of expectation and hierarchical pressure.

Religious households

The expectations, pressures and bonds of co-residency were felt by both religious and secular households alike. Religious houses of all types joined the Palmers' Guild in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, particularly those within the Welsh Marches, and displayed an enthusiasm for guild membership that was mirrored by abbots and priors from across England and Wales.¹⁷⁵ Benedictine monks and nuns were the most numerous (with twenty different houses represented), followed by the Augustinian and Cistercian orders (eight and seven houses respectively), with a smaller number of Cluniac, Carmelite and Premonstratensian communities enrolling. In total, over 300 regular clergy joined the Palmers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹⁷⁶ The popularity of the Palmers' Guild

within late medieval religious houses was reflected in the enrolment of the laity who worked within these institutions. The two Llanthony houses – Llanthony *Prima* in Monmouthshire and Llanthony *Secunda* at Gloucester – illustrate this phenomenon well.¹⁷⁷ 1504/5 was the first time the canons from Llanthony *Secunda* joined the Palmers (seven canons and the prior), but they were accompanied by six servants from their house.¹⁷⁸ These non-monastic members are described individually as ‘servant’ and no further description of their role is given in the record. Servants from other houses, including Gloucester, Reading, Worcester, Chester, Evesham and Great Malvern, joined the Palmers alongside the religious affiliates of those houses.¹⁷⁹ The majority are described as servants of the religious house, but there are exceptions that reflect the realities of these ecclesiastical institutions. The superior of a house kept his or her own household, financially supported by the monastery.¹⁸⁰ In the case of Llanthony *Secunda* in 1504/5, each man was described as a servant of the lord prior; a similar situation can be found in those enrolled from Bromfield (Shropshire), St Bartholomew the Great (Smithfield), Buildwas (Shropshire) and Nuneaton (Warwickshire). We might assume that – given these descriptions – the influence of the head of a household worked in much the same way in religious houses or secular households.

A saying, copied into the sixteenth-century ‘journal’ of Prior William More of Worcester, alludes to the importance of guild membership for heads of households, secular and religious: ‘Each seeks after those like him. A sober lord has a sober household. A foolish lord has a foolish household; for since God is holy he seeks a holy household’.¹⁸¹ The inclusion of such a phrase suggests that it found resonance with More who, as the head of the monastic household, sought to emulate God’s holy example by ensuring that those under his charge (in both his personal household and the monastery more widely) were sufficiently holy themselves. We might also see this sentiment as indicative of wider attitudes. Membership of a prestigious religious fraternity, such as the Palmers’ Guild, was a relatively easy way for heads to encourage further religiosity in and among their brethren and servants. The enrolment of servants provided a way of enacting the superior’s desire for a ‘holy household’ while likewise assisting the need to maintain a household of good repute. The behaviour of the servants of the abbot, prior or prioress was a factor in the reputation of the house as a whole, and, in a period of increasing debate about the role of the superior’s household in late medieval England, ensuring that attendants were honourable and ‘holy’ was an important preoccupation of the superior.¹⁸² If the heads of secular households were motivated to ensure their subordinates appeared outwardly pious, this impetus was multiplied for the head of a religious household.

How far the impetus for guild membership was in an individual's own hands versus pressure from a superior or the community is unclear. There must have been some individual choice as there are (as far as we know) no examples of the entirety of a monastic and lay community at the same house joining at the same time, which might have suggested mandatory or enforced membership within that community. There are, however, moments in which a sweeping enthusiasm for the Palmers is apparent, as found in 1504/5 in Llanthony *Secunda*, whose servants and monks almost exclusively joined in one year. The enrolment of new canons and servants from Llanthony *Secunda* was not found again until 1515/16, although it must be remembered that only partial membership records survive for the period between 1509 and 1515.¹⁸³

The monastic house, like the secular household, was a natural ally for the continually expanding Palmers' Guild in the century leading up to the Reformation; through access to a concentrated group of like-minded individuals, the guild could easily attract new members while also increasing the chances of consistently paid fees. For, practically, if collecting money from one member of the house, others would probably contribute at the same time. At Llanthony *Secunda*, despite the lack of (visible) continued recruitment in this house, the canons duly continued to pay their debt to the guild. Robert Cun exemplifies the standard practice for this house. He joined with his brethren in 1504/5, and each subsequent year he contributed varying amounts between 8d and 20d, until he had paid the total entrance fee of 6s 8d.¹⁸⁴ For the years in which Cun paid, payments from fellow brethren, like John Gloucetur and Thomas Maysmor were also recorded.¹⁸⁵ Each of these men contributed a portion of money towards their membership fee every year; a regularity that may have been encouraged by communal living. The active participation of the household, as a microcosm of membership, was further reinforced by the regular potations, not to mention gifts, to the household facilitated by the guild stewards each year.

While households were not necessarily entirely insular in nature, the bonds created through co-residency were not negligible in their translation to guild membership. Households with members within them were microcosms of the guild, each scattered across Wales and England, but working to reinforce solidarity between participants. A master's particular interest in guild membership led to wider household membership, while more horizontal connections between servants could encourage membership. The obligations of a master to provide for his servants' spiritual and physical well-being was another factor, and a responsibility that might take the form of financial responsibility for a servant who had begun membership payments but was unable to complete them. Each participant in a

household would have experienced the influence of their connections with both their master and co-residents. Co-residency networks, therefore, were a significant contributor to the facilitation of guild networks.

The influence of networks II: external pressures

The strength of ties between members of a household explains how and why many servants enrolled in the Palmers' Guild. These ties were both vertical and horizontal: between masters and servants and between servants and their colleagues. But households were not isolated structures, and those of the gentry and nobility certainly experienced, and reacted to, the actions of their peers and the influence of role models such as the royal household. This section will therefore pick up this theme in an attempt to identify and analyse the external pressures that encouraged household membership of the Palmers.

In the 1460s, forty-seven members of Edward IV's household, including servants of Queen Elizabeth Woodville, enrolled in the Palmers.¹⁸⁶ Edward's association was no doubt spurred by his father's enrolment in the guild in 1438, a product of the position of Richard, Duke of York, as lord of Ludlow.¹⁸⁷ Whether a deliberate policy or not, Henry's household – and his children and grandchildren's households – association with the Palmers continued a relationship between a local institution and its lord.¹⁸⁸ Of course, when the king was the lord, the trickle-down of membership through his affinity was more impressive than members of the nobility. This royal example may very well have set a precedent for the gentry and nobility during the 1460s and 1470s, but unfortunately the dearth of guild sources during Edward's reign leaves no way to corroborate this theory. The sources are, however, more complete for the years during Henry VII's reign. The first members of Henry's household joined the guild between 1485 and 1489, although only three did so.¹⁸⁹ In the 1490s, between two and five members joined per annum and this continued throughout the guild's lifetime, yet this was only a fraction of the 800 plus members of Henry's household.¹⁹⁰ These figures inevitably raise the question of the extent to which the royal household influenced membership of the Palmers. Did noble households join the Palmers as a unit because of the trend set out by Edward IV, Henry VII and Arthur, Prince of Wales?

The numbers of Henry VII's household joining the guild on an annual basis were small, and there appears to have been no immediate effect on noble households, as the first recorded noble household did not join the Palmers until 1501/2.¹⁹¹ Yet Henry's household was not the only royal household in the realm in the late fifteenth century. The impact on

household membership of the king's two sons, Arthur and Henry, was arguably more influential than their father's. Arthur's initial involvement with the guild was, of course, a product of his move to Ludlow in 1493, as was the enrolment of numerous members of his household who resided with him until his death in 1502. At least ninety-eight members of the 'prince's household' enrolled in the Palmers between 1497 and 1509. This period includes the time after Arthur's death in which his brother Henry was Prince of Wales, from 1503 until his accession in 1509. Of the ninety-eight known members of the princes' households, seventy-eight joined under Arthur, while only twenty joined while Henry was prince.¹⁹² This discrepancy can partly be accounted for by the transfer of some of Arthur's household to Henry, as some members continued paying off their membership fee during Henry's time as Prince of Wales.¹⁹³ Continued enrolment of members of Prince Henry's household, despite his lack of residency in Ludlow, speaks to a precedent that was set by Arthur.

Some of those in service with Arthur had servants of their own, and the knock-on effect in relation to them is worth considering here. Four servants under the heading of the 'prince's household' in 1499/1500 were identified as servants of William Uvedale, knight, commissioner and councillor of the Council of the Marches, who himself was in Arthur's service.¹⁹⁴ Uvedale's deceased parents, Thomas and Margaret, are enrolled on the same folio as his servants. It is quite clear that Uvedale was responsible for enrolling both his servants and his parents, a fact which demonstrates a certain level of investment in membership. The example of Bishop William Smyth's household again demonstrates the effect patterns of membership set by Arthur had on noble households. Smyth was president of the Council of the Marches and a prominent member of the prince's household, and, although he himself is not known to have enrolled (but likely did), thirteen of Smyth's servants joined the Palmers under the heading of the 'prince's household' in the riding books.¹⁹⁵ In the cases of Uvedale and Smyth, their household membership was influenced by two factors: their own position as part of Arthur's entourage and the example set by Arthur. Just as with servants in smaller households, the internal pressures that emanated from a precedent set by Arthur informed the shape of guild membership within the princely household, but the respective head of each smaller household was a lynchpin who clearly disseminated patterns of guild membership downwards, thereby creating two tiers of influence. It is apparent, therefore, that there was an expectation that participation in the guild was part of the role of each man and his servants.

Households within the larger, princely household, however, were not the only examples of the influence of the princely household on

membership. It also set the model for separate noble household enrolment in the guild. The Prince of Wales' attachment to Ludlow as the seat of the Council of the Marches as well as his personal seat of power may have directed his own initial involvement, but his actions were felt across the kingdom. A few notable nobles and their households joined the guild in the years following Arthur's move to Ludlow and the beginning of his household enrolment. For example, George Grey, Earl of Kent, and his wife Katherine enrolled in 1501/2 along with nine other members of their household.¹⁹⁶ In the same year, Thomas, Earl of Surrey and Lord High Treasurer of England, joined with Agnes, his wife, and three other members of the household.¹⁹⁷ The quick succession of enrolment by these nobles is demonstrative of Arthur's influence within the personal households of his subjects. While not members of the Council, there was evidently a trend or a fashion for noble involvement in the Palmers which can be traced back to Arthur's association with Ludlow. Certainly both Grey and Howard had their own connections to Arthur, as might be expected for nobility of the realm; Grey had familial connections with Arthur's mother, Elizabeth of York, through his first marriage and to Henry VII through his second marriage, while Howard was heavily involved in both Arthur's wedding and funeral.¹⁹⁸

One of the interesting characteristics of household membership within a guild was the ability, or potential, to 'flatten' the hierarchies present within the household. As has been mentioned, the household could be stratified and governed by strict regulations.¹⁹⁹ Yet guild membership, outside of the governing council, was a space without formal hierarchy for the majority of members. As Gervase Rosser has argued, guild feasts were a space in which members could forge relationships that crossed traditional economic and social boundaries within the hierarchical structures.²⁰⁰ Unspoken politics and hierarchy may very well have existed, but, crucially, there was no institutionalised hierarchy among membership. The diversity and range of social status of members in the Palmers make this even more stark. That so many servants of gentry and mercantile houses joined, who appear to have been very much 'ordinary' servants and not of gentle birth, demonstrates the inclusivity of the guild.

The household of Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, does not, however, conform to the trend of membership at all levels of the household. In 1505/6, while Henry was Prince of Wales, Stafford headed the enrolment of at least nineteen members of his household and the duchess joined the following year.²⁰¹ A further four individuals joined the Palmers at the same time as the duke; they may have been part of his household although it is unclear from the records. This was the largest household enrolled in the Palmers, with the exceptions of the king's and princes' households.

Stafford had a significant number of gentle-born servants in his household: between thirty-three and thirty-seven per cent.²⁰² The members of his household who joined the Palmers were almost wholly gentle-born or held positions within the higher echelons of the household hierarchy. They included men such as John Russell, his secretary; John Gregory, clerk of the household; Richard Pooley, clerk of the spicery and future clerk of the household; Thomas Kemys, gentleman server; and Ambrose Skelton, gentleman server.²⁰³ The type of servants who joined the Palmers with the duke, such as his receiver and secretary, coupled with the complete absence of female servants, suggests that these individuals were part of his 'riding' household, for there were certainly gentlewomen employed in the duke's household.²⁰⁴ This is further suggested by the fact that these entries were recorded under the heading of *Extranei*, and not enrolled at the duke's formal residences at Thornbury or London.²⁰⁵ The duchess' separate enrolment in the guild records is significant; she did not enrol at the same time as her husband or his servants, rather appearing on the registers of admission in 1507.²⁰⁶ Buckingham's household was fluid. Only a portion of his councillors – men found with him in the guild records like his secretary, treasurer, comptroller – resided at his primary residence of Thornbury at any one time.²⁰⁷ Although there would have been lesser servants among the travelling household (which consisted of approximately sixty people), none of these are to be found in the Palmers' records.²⁰⁸ Did the hierarchy of the household translate to guild membership in the case of the great noble households? Stafford's example would suggest that the inclusivity did not stretch into the household of the duke; only his closest servants became members. Was this, in fact, another demonstration of internal influence? Unlike other households, both gentry and merchant, where the head of the household encouraged membership among servants of all statuses, thus increasing the guild's membership, only certain, more elite, members of Stafford's household joined – a sign, perhaps, of his distance from lesser servants in his household. In this case, the master's influence did not appear to be aligned with the guild's ethos, for the Palmers did not exclude individuals based on their status in society.

More likely guild membership among those close to Stafford was a result of Stafford's conscientious policy regarding religious institutions. He took an active role in visiting religious houses around Thornbury, bestowing large sums of money on them. He endowed Tewkesbury Abbey with an annual income of £60, and, very publicly restored order to Kingswood Abbey (Gloucestershire) when a riot broke out there in 1517.²⁰⁹ His standing was demonstrated when the canons of Maxstoke requested that Stafford sit in judgement on their prior.²¹⁰ Like many great households, he had a

chapel and several chaplains along with a choir.²¹¹ Barbara Harris has suggested that he exhibited an attachment to shrines, as each year, around Easter, Buckingham spent a month or more visiting shrines in a local area (changing each year).²¹² In 1508, he spent the period between 29 March and 30 June at a monastery in Keynsham, Somerset, and visited nearby religious shrines.²¹³ He owned enough church plate to create a suitable atmosphere in the chapel at his principal seat at Thornbury to complement the opulence of his residence.²¹⁴ Joining the fraternity at Ludlow was another expression of Stafford's piety, and his interest in guild membership was probably the motivation for those of his household that did join up – those who were closest to him rather than a cross-section of his household. Stafford's household membership, although appearing at first sight to be an outlier, was consistent with the wider patterns of guild membership as promoted by the personal interests of the master outlined earlier.

Alongside household piety, Stafford's own interest in the guild may have been influenced by familial networks beyond the household. It is a truism that late medieval England consisted of a dense tangle of interwoven ties between gentle and noble families, and many of these connections were forged through marriage which were ultimately the extension of kinship ties. The household, while generally considered a group of individuals who were co-resident, had a wider influence in bolstering the membership of the guild. Familial ties were a significant factor behind the influx of certain households joining the Palmers, as can be demonstrated in the case of Stafford. Stafford's brother-in-law, Sir Walter Herbert of Chepstow and his wife, Anne, joined the Palmers in 1505/6 along with two of their servants.²¹⁵ It is hardly coincidental that Anne's brother, Stafford, then joined the Palmers the following year alongside ten members of his household.²¹⁶ In the same year that Stafford's household became Palmers, Anne returned to her brother's residence as a widow.²¹⁷ The enrolment of the Herberts and their servants in the Palmers the previous year, and Anne's move to Thornbury, is too closely aligned to the enrolment of Stafford and his household to be mere coincidence. Over the next two years, while Anne was living at Thornbury, at least another four members of Stafford's household became guild members.²¹⁸ Walter and Anne Herbert were not the only ones of this extended family already involved in the Palmers. The Herberts of Troy, another branch of the family, were a substantial presence in Monmouthshire. Like the primary branch of the family, the household of William Herbert (Walter's half-brother) were Palmers. Blanche, his wife, joined in 1504/5, alongside three of their children and two servants.²¹⁹ Both lines of the Herberts embodied a sort of advocacy for family influence upon guild membership, but, more

specifically, the household as an actor within the guild. While household ties were clearly an influence on membership, so, too, were kinship ties in fostering household membership.

These were not isolated cases of familial influence. Thomas Savage was the most distantly located (from Ludlow) member of a Cheshire gentry family but was the first to engage with the Palmers. Savage served as a diplomat through the late 1480s and 1490s and then moved through a succession of roles within the Church: from the bishopric of Rochester to that of London in 1496 and finally to the archbishopric of York in 1501. Bishop Savage's relationship with the Palmers began with the enrolment of four of his servants in 1497 while he was bishop of London.²²⁰ Over the next decade, a steady trickle of individuals connected with the Savages began to join the Palmers. Savage, despite being located in London, sparked a movement within his kin network. After various servants of Thomas' household enrolled, John Savage VI (of Hanley, Staffordshire) followed suit with the enrolment of four of his servants.²²¹ It seems highly likely that the kinship ties between John VI and his uncle Thomas prompted the former to embrace the concept of household membership to a guild along with the spiritual and social benefits attached to it. The kinship link was the stimulus, but the influence of co-residency within the household equally played a role in encouraging membership. Unlike Bishop Thomas' household, who joined all at once, the Savage household at Hanley joined the Palmers in a slow stream. The enrolment of the first servant took place in 1499, followed by Alice (aunt of John VI) in 1503, then her siblings Edmund and Margaret, along with another servant of John VI, in 1504. Finally, two more servants enrolled in 1505, followed by Lawrence Savage in 1506.²²² Maud, John VI's aunt, also enrolled at Hanley along with her husband Sir Robert Needham.²²³ While they were unlikely to be living permanently with the Savages, for their home lay in Shenton (Shropshire) they must have been visiting the Savage household for their enrolment to take place in Hanley. The domino effect on enrolment of the household is clear, and it was blind to status. The growth of membership within the Savage household continually alternated between servant and gentleman/woman or even both together in the same year. Further kinship ties are visible in the enrolment of Thomas Stanley and four servants of his father, George Stanley, Baron Strange, and heir apparent to Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of Derby.²²⁴ The Stanleys were cousins of the Savages through the marriage of Katherine Stanley to John IV Savage. While the fairly substantial number of twenty individuals associated with these prominent, intertwined families might seem unsurprising if taken simply as a nod to their location near Shropshire, which was the Palmers' base, the breakdown of their enrolment has

demonstrated that their guild membership was a product of the influences of kinship and co-residency rather than simple proximity. It is clear, therefore, that wider networks influenced the choices made by individual households, including royal influence and that of broad kin networks.

Conclusion

Perhaps unsurprisingly, household membership in the Palmers' Guild was as diverse as individual membership. Yet three broad trends account for why household membership became popular in late medieval England and Wales. The first was the influence of life cycle, especially in reference to servants. If service is conceptualised as one stage of this life cycle, then single-year payments can be readily accounted for, but other factors such as moving, marriage and death proved to be equally influential on membership trends. Throughout this process, the guiding hand of the master is often identifiable (although not in all cases), and this leads to the second substantive reason for membership: internal household influences in the forms of an employer's personal preferences, the affective bonds between members of a household, and the creation of Palmer enclaves at a distance from the guild itself. Households of regional magnates and gentry have been noted for their role as centres of 'religious instruction', alongside the more obvious religious houses, and guild membership appears to have been an output of this role of the household.²²⁵ These internal factors were both contrasted with, and complemented by, external pressures, such as kinship links between households and the example set by Prince Arthur's court at Ludlow. It is clear from these trends that certain benefits encouraged household guild membership. These benefits fall into two interrelated strands: piety and reputation.

More generally, the reach of the Palmers' Guild, geographically and socially, allows us properly to situate this household membership. The relatively infrequent mention of the guild's own mechanisms for recruitment in this chapter highlights the role the laity played in expansion of the Palmers. The role of guild administration in encouraging a diverse membership, as discussed in the Introduction, was vital to this achievement, but so, too, were the internal and external pressures on households. The processes by which households joined the guild, and the influences upon those processes, speak to the importance of the Palmers within late medieval society. Guild membership was a manifestation of the 'ordinary theology' of medieval men and women, explaining its pervasive nature in the household – and beyond.

Notes

1. SA: LB/5/1/1, m. 1. The membrane is damaged with no surviving identifications of where Joan (and therefore her master) was residing.
2. SA: LB/5/1/2.
3. SA: LB/5/1/3–4.
4. P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Preface', in *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850 – c. 1550: Managing Power, Wealth, and the Body*, ed. Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic and Sarah Rees Jones (Turnhout, 2003), 226.
5. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 46r; LB/5/3/2, f. 136v; LB/5/3/7, f. 24r.
6. SA: LB/5/3/9, ff. 25r–v. Lady Newton's involvement in the guild went beyond the encouragement of her household becoming Palmers, as a guild inventory of 1517/8 lists a gilt cup and cover gifted by her. LB/5/3/36, f. 17v.
7. SA: LB/5/3/1–15; LB/5/3/37.
8. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 63r.
9. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 120r. This may be modern-day Ingoldsby, Lincolnshire.
10. SA: LB/5/3/1, f. 3v.
11. Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c. 1350–1558* (Woodbridge, 1996); Christine Carpenter, 'Town and Country: The Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-century Warwickshire', in *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196–1996*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stroud, 1997), 62–79; Barbara A. Hanawalt and Ben R. McRee, 'The Guilds of *Homo Prudens* in Late Medieval England', *Continuity and Change*, 7, no. 2 (August 1992), 163–79; Robert Swanson, 'Books of Brotherhood: Registering Fraternity and Confraternity in Late Medieval England', in *The Durham Liber Vitae and Its Context*, ed. David Rollason, Alan J. Piper, Margaret Harvey and Lynda Rollason (Woodbridge, 2004), 233–46; Robert Swanson, 'A Medieval Staffordshire Fraternity: The Guild of St. John the Baptist, Walsall', in *Staffordshire Histories: Essays in Honour of Michael Greenslade*, ed. Philip Morgan and Anthony David Murray Phillips (Keele, 1999), 47–65.
12. David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 2000), 181.
13. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, 181.
14. As discussed in Swanson, 'Books of Brotherhood', 233–46.
15. Lynda Rollason, 'The Late Medieval Non-Monastic Entries in the Durham *Liber Vitae*', in *The Durham Liber Vitae and Its Context*, ed. David Rollason, Alan J. Piper, Margaret Harvey and Lynda Rollason (Woodbridge, 2004), 130–31.
16. Rollason, 'Non-Monastic Entries', 131.
17. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, 2005); Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late-Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1 (1991), 173–89; Clive Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 2018).
18. Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1998); Clive Burgess, 'Making Mammon Serve God: Merchant Piety in Later Medieval England', in *The Medieval Merchant: Proceedings of the 2012 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (Donington, 2014), 183–207; Joel T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise: The Social Function of Aristocratic Benevolence, 1307–1405* (London and Toronto, 1972); Christine Carpenter,

Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499 (Cambridge, 1992), 242; Christine Carpenter, ‘Religion of the Gentry in the Fifteenth Century’, in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. D. Williams (Woodbridge, 1987), 66; Nigel Saul, *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2017), 110; Nigel Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280–1400* (Oxford, 1986), 159.

19. Caroline M. Barron, ‘The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London’, in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 1985) 13–37.

20. Rob Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England: Reconstructing Piety* (Woodbridge, 2006).

21. One way this was expressed was in the rebuilding of parish churches, a feat which was undertaken under many different auspices and by many different groups: Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2017).

22. Gabriel Byng, ‘“In Common for Everyone”: Shared Space and Private Possessions in the English Parish Church Nave’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 45, no. 2 (2019), 231–53.

23. Nikolaus Pevsner and Edward Hubbard, *The Buildings of England: Cheshire* (New Haven, 1971; reprint 2001), 267.

24. Ian Forrest, ‘The Politics of Burial in Late Medieval Hereford’, *English Historical Review*, 125, no. 516 (October 2010), 1136.

25. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, 242; Saul, *Lordship and Faith*, 110; Richard Asquith, ‘Serving the Needs of a Lakeland Parish: Kendal in the Later Middle Ages’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, New Series, 17 (2017), 89–93.

26. Colin Richmond, ‘Religion and the Fifteenth-Century Gentleman’, in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. B. Dobson (Gloucester, 1984), 199.

27. This was certainly the case found by Carpenter. Some of the gentry names she gives as possessing chapels are family names found in the Palmers’ records: Chetwynds, Fulwodes and Harewells. Carpenter, ‘Religion of the Gentry’, 63.

28. Sarah Rees Jones and Felicity Riddy, ‘The Bolton Book of Hours: Female Domestic Piety and the Public Sphere’, in *Household, Women and Christianities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout, 2005), 238.

29. Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales: 1500–1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), 353.

30. Katherine L. French, *Household Goods and Good Households in Late Medieval London: Consumption and Domesticity After the Plague* (Philadelphia, 2021), chapter 7.

31. Robert Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007).

32. Among the most common tools for such reading were books of hours, which ranged from elaborate illuminated volumes to cheap, printed ones. Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240–1570* (New Haven, 2006); Rees Jones and Riddy, ‘The Bolton Book of Hours’, 220.

33. For example, as instructed in Richard Whitford’s *Werke for Housholders*. Lucy Wooding, ‘Richard Whitford’s *Werke for Housholders*: Humanism, Monasticism and Tudor Household Piety’, *Studies in Church History*, 50 (2014), 162–5.

34. Ian Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith Made the Medieval Church* (Princeton, 2018), [chapter 1](#).

35. Clive Burgess, 'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented: An Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Late Medieval England', in *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350–1750*, ed. S.J. Wright (London 1988), 56–84.
36. R.G.K.A. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', in *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Joel Rosenthal and Colin Richmond (New York, 1987), 136.
37. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', 136.
38. Philippa Maddern, 'Order and Disorder', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London, 2004), 205–8.
39. Chris Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity: Service, Politics, and Finance in England, 1360–1413* (New Haven, 1986), 1.
40. 'Henry VII: November 1485, Part 2', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry and Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge, 2005), *British History Online*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/november-1485-pt-2>.
41. Maddern, 'Order and Disorder', 208.
42. Sarah Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour: The Regulation of Labour in Medieval English Towns', in *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. James Bothwell, J. Goldberg and W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 2000), 142–3, 151; Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), 144–5.
43. Philippa Maddern, '"In Myn Own House": The Troubled Connections Between Servant Marriages, Late-Medieval English Household Communities and Early Modern Historiography', in *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (Aldershot, 2008), 54.
44. McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex and Civic Culture*, 138.
45. Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 67, no. 1 (January 1992), 70; Ben McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Regulation of Behaviour in Late Medieval Towns', in *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Joel Rosenthal and Colin Richmond (Gloucester, 1987), 108–9. An early modern example of the importance placed on the behaviours, especially speech, as a reflection of reputation can be found in Jennifer Bishop, 'Speech and Sociability: The Regulation of Language in the Livery Companies of Early Modern London', in *Cities and Solidarities: Urban Communities in Pre-modern Europe*, ed. Justin Colson and Arie van Steensel (Abingdon, 2017), 208–24.
46. Gervase Rosser, 'The Ethics of Confraternity', in *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Leiden, 2019), 91. Rosser discusses this idea more in depth in *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250–1550* (Oxford, 2015).
47. Felicity Heal, 'Reciprocity and Exchange in the Late Medieval Household', in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis, 1996), 189.
48. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', 131.
49. Rosser, 'Ethics of Confraternity', 104.
50. Rosser suggested that the practice for admission of new members took place at the end of the annual feast. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33, no. 4 (October 1994), 435.
51. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', 439.

52. Peter Fleming, 'Household Servants of the Yorkist and Early Tudor Gentry', in *Early Tudor England: Proceedings of the 1987 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, 1989), 22.
53. Fleming, 'Household Servants', 28.
54. SA: LB/5/3/1.
55. The only consistent exception to this is the position of cook or clerk of the kitchen, which appears with regularity. Otherwise, other offices are rarely commented on. For example, only one example of a receiver is found: Thomas Seppenham (of the Duke of Buckingham's household) in the Palmers' register of 1507–9. SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 2.
56. SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 84r, 148v.
57. There is the possibility to search each individual's background, and it might prove fruitful, although, with over 18,000 members, it would be a monumental task. For example, Roger Ledsam of Chester is described in the guild records as a servant of the Abbot of Chester, yet other sources reveal him to also be a shearman as well as a servant. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 7v; R.V.H. Burne, *The Monks of Chester* (London, 1962), 147.
58. For example, SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 67v.
59. Rosemary Horrox, 'Richard III and London', *The Ricardian*, 6 (1985), 323.
60. Philippa Maddern expressed a warning that a description such as 'servant' in records doesn't preclude other identities attached to them, such as 'husband' or 'wife': Maddern, 'In Myn Own House', 48.
61. Jane Whittle, 'Servants in Rural England c. 1450–1650: Hired Work as a Means of Accumulating Wealth and Skills Before Marriage', in *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400–1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson (Abingdon, 2016), 90.
62. Whittle, 'Servants in Rural England', 95, 103.
63. Fleming, 'Household Servants', 24.
64. For the Herberts, see SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 25v; LB/5/3/7, f. 50v; LB/5/1/3, m. 7. For John Lewes and his family see: LB/5/3/7, f. 11v.
65. It is not easy to draw concrete conclusions about the size of families. For an analysis of household size generally, see J. Krause, 'The Medieval Household: Large or Small?', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 9, no. 3 (1957), 420–32; Peter Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (Basingstoke, 2001), 65–70. The average household in late fourteenth-century York was between 3.91 and 4.58: Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, 72–3. Norwich families had an average of 2.24 children: Norman Tanner, 'Popular Religion in Norwich with Special Reference to the Evidence of Wills, 1370–1552' (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 1974), 58. Thrupp's study of London found references to families with two to nineteen children: Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300–1500* (Michigan, 1989), 198–9.
66. SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 14v.
67. SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 15r.
68. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 29r.
69. For example, Sir William Griffith's household and Edward Stafford's household.
70. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 38r.
71. P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire, c. 1300–1520* (Oxford, 1992), 195.
72. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Lifecycle*, 160; other major centres displayed similar trends of merchant households as substantial employers: merchants accounted for over fifty per cent of the employment of servants in York in 1377: Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, 130. The mean number of servants in Coventry was between 2.45 and 2.7:

Charles Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), 205.

73. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 160, 311–5.

74. The number of new Palmers varied year to year. For example, in 1504/5, forty-nine Palmers joined from Coventry and sixty-one in 1507/8. Coventry was consistently in the top five towns that contributed to new membership.

75. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 135r.

76. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 28r.

77. SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 29r, 29v; LB/5/3/9, f. 15v.

78. SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 6.

79. Lenche's wife, Anne, did join the guild the year before the servants, and so Lenche may have joined himself in a year in which records do not survive. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 7, f. 27r; LB/5/3/2, f. 36r.

80. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 37v; LB/5/3/7, f. 19r.

81. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 18v; LB/5/3/7, f. 29r; LB/5/3/9, f. 13v.

82. R.G.K.A. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', 124; Rawlinson concludes that all gentle and noble households maintained a chapel: Kent Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel c. 1100 – c.1500: An Institutional Study' (PhD diss., Durham University, 2008), 258.

83. Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel', 263.

84. Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel', 264; Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', 127; Audrey M. Thorstad, *The Culture of Castles in Tudor England and Wales* (Woodbridge, 2019), 116.

85. This number consists of those who were given the following titles by the Palmers' scribes: chaplain, rector, vicar, priest, prebendary and guild chaplain.

86. SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 83v, 84v, 119v, 184v.

87. SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 42v; LB/5/3/2, f. 140r. Two chaplains of Grey's household joined: SA: LB/5/2/3, f. 35v.

88. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 46v. It is possible that this John Longland was the same one who went on to become Henry VIII's confessor and Bishop of Lincoln, but his connection to Hereford diocese does not appear in biographical accounts. A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1957), 1160–63; Margaret Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln Under John Longland, 1521–1547* (Cambridge, 1981).

89. 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous', in *L&P*, vol. 1, 1533–57.

90. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 158.

91. There are exceptions, of course, particularly with 'career servants', who stayed with a household longer-term. For example, a falconer who was employed by the bishop of London and joined the Palmers: SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 127v.

92. I have excluded the wives who were listed with male servants as it is unclear whether they were also servants.

93. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 56v.

94. See, for example, an exploration of London journeymen and their relationships with masters: Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford, 1993), 195–8.

95. Also spelled 'Ryse'. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 81r; LB/5/1/4, m. 2; 'Records of London's Livery Companies Online: Apprentices and Freeman, 1400–1900', https://londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEB2198.

96. P.J.P. Goldberg, 'What Was a Servant?', in *Concepts and Practices of Service in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Anne Curry and Elizabeth Matthews (Woodbridge, 2000), 4.
97. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 138v.
98. TNA: C 1/406/5.
99. James Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England: The Bristol Elite, Urban Community and the Crown, c. 1471 – c.1553' (PhD diss., University of the West of England, 2006), 41; Annabel Peacock, 'The Men of Bristol and the Atlantic Discovery Voyages of the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries' (MA thesis, University of Bristol, 2007), [chapter 5](#).
100. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 135r.
101. Waren held numerous offices before becoming mayor in 1519. Ruddyings was a member of the leet jury: *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor's Register Containing the Records of the City Court Leet*, 2 vols., ed. Mary Dormer Harris (London, 1907).
102. SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 15r, 16r.
103. Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (New York, 2002).
104. Louisa Foroughi, "'To Sey or Thinke Otherwise": Ordinary Theology and Facing Death in Late Medieval Norfolk', *Religions*, 9, no. 67 (2018), 3–4.
105. Servants became more of a transient group by the fifteenth century: Christopher M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, 1999), 37; Whittle, 'Servants in Rural England', 89; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 176.
106. Anywhere north of the Trent and in Lincolnshire, the fairs usually took place around Martinmas (11 November) and elsewhere in the country around Michaelmas (29 September): Goldberg, 'What Was a Servant?', 11.
107. Goldberg, 'What Was a Servant?', 15.
108. The number of servants who only made one payment cannot be said with certainty. The riding books, especially for the late fifteenth century, have suffered damages that often obscure vital pieces of information, including a number of payments by individuals.
109. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 53r.
110. SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 18r.
111. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 178r.
112. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 177; Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), 59.
113. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, 152.
114. Goldberg, *Work, Women and Life Cycle*, 177.
115. SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 32v.
116. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 8r.
117. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 149r.
118. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 50r. For Elizabeth's entry, see LB/5/3/7, f. 46r.
119. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 176.
120. Fleming, *Family and Household*, 72–6; Whittle, 'Servants in Rural England', 89–110; Shannon McSheffrey, ed., *Love and Marriage in Late Medieval London* (Kalamazoo, 1995); Sarah Rees Jones, 'Household, Work and the Problem of Mobile Labour: The Regulation of Labour in Medieval English Towns', in *The Problem of*

Labour in Fourteenth-Century England, ed. James Bothwell, J. Goldberg and W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 2000), 133–53. Philippa Maddern challenged this historiographical tendency and concluded that some late medieval English households included married members who were in service: Maddern, ‘In Myn Own House’, 45–60.

121. Fleming, ‘Household Servants’, 25; Whittle, ‘Servants in Rural England’, 89.

122. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 29r.

123. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 14v.

124. This percentage has been calculated using the total number of entries, not the total number of individuals (husbands and wives are often within one entry). This produces a more accurate reflection as it is unclear whether the women described in the entries are also servants.

125. Goldberg has found that women outnumbered men in towns and constituted a relatively high proportion of servants: Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 165. Most servants in noble and gentry households were male: Fleming, *Family and Household*, 75.

126. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 166, 187.

127. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 172, 185.

128. Katherine L. French, ‘Maidens’ Lights and Wives’ Stores: Women’s Parish Guilds in Late Medieval England’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 29, no. 2 (Summer 1998), 399–425, especially 411; Katherine L. French, ‘“To Free Them from Their Binding”: Women in the Late Medieval English Parish’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 27, no. 3 (Winter 1997), 409.

129. Michele Saucer iterates that dowries were a provision provided by medieval guilds, while the Palmers are used as an example of guild provisions for single women by Cordelia Beattie. Michelle M. Saucer, *Gender in Medieval Culture* (London, 2015), 139; Cordelia Beattie, *Medieval Single Women: The Politics of Social Classification in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2007), 113.

130. Joshua Toulmin Smith, ed., *English Gilds* (London, 1963), 194, 340.

131. J. Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, 156.

132. J. Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, 193.

133. Maddern contested this assumption: Maddern, ‘In Myn Own House’, 45–60.

134. Whittle and Goldberg offer different interpretations of how much the average late medieval servant was paid and subsequently whether service allowed savings for marriage. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 185–6, Whittle, ‘Servants in Rural England’, 95–103.

135. While it is difficult to discern how much ‘choice’ a servant had in their enrolment in the guild, continued payments beyond a year (the usual length of a contract) indicates an inclination towards membership.

136. The Palmers’ ordinances outline that they will provide a dowry for her when her father is unable. J. Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, 194, 215–9, 234.

137. Some historians have pointed out the limited – and at times, absence of – expenditure on those in need and questioned the reality of charity in late medieval fraternities. Barron, ‘The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London’, 26–7; Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987), 255. For the circumstances of the 1389 guild returns see Jan Gerchow, ‘Gilds and Fourteenth-century Bureaucracy: The Case of 1338–9’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 40 (1996), 109–48.

138. For example, [Marga]ret Wyche, ‘sister of the guild’, received 2s from the guild in charity in 1425. SA: LB/5/3/24, m. 4. Other money given to brethren in need can be found throughout the same accounts.

139. Ben R. McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 32, no. 3 (July 1993), 195–225.
140. I have excluded the wives who were listed with male servants as it is unclear whether they were also servants.
141. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 41v.
142. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 15r; LB/5/3/5, ff. 41v, 42r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 28v, 31r; LB/5/3/7, f. 43r.
143. It ranged from eighteen to thirty-three per cent for each year of new recruits.
144. Enrolment of the deceased into England's large fraternities has been explored in Rachael Harkes, 'Remembering the Dead: Postmortem Guild Membership in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 63, no. 2 (April 2024), 323–48.
145. For example, Mairi Macdonald, ed., *Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2007), 81–2, 416–8.
146. Macdonald, *Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, Stratford-upon-Avon*, 416–7.
147. Goldberg, 'What Was a Servant?', 2.
148. Extra-parochial is used here not in the sense of a guild as a competing religious institution to the parish but as involvement in religious institutions outside of the geographical confines of the parish.
149. Rawlinson, 'The English Household Chapel', 258; Nicholas Orme, 'Church and Chapel in Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1996), 81–2.
150. Deborah Youngs, *Humphrey Newton: An Early Tudor Gentleman* (Woodbridge, 2008), 119–21.
151. Youngs, *Humphrey Newton*, 122, n. 71.
152. Goldberg, 'What Was a Servant?', 17; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 182; Woolgar, *The Great Household*, 32–3.
153. TNA: PROB 11/19/241.
154. In gentry households, male household servants were twice as likely to receive bequests as female servants. The discrepancy between the two cash payments given may be a reflection of this or a reflection of the differences in wages that each gender received: Woolgar, *The Great Household*, 34.
155. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 182.
156. Household members were expected to participate in the master's funeral. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', 135; Richard Asquith, 'Piety and Trust: Testators and Executors in Pre-Reformation London' (PhD diss., University of London, 2022), 114 and appendix 1.
157. TNA: PROB 11/19/241.
158. Kermode and Goldberg have both suggested this idea as demonstrated through gifts of cash or bedding to servants after they had left service. The phrase 'once my servant' was utilised in wills with some frequency: Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, 130–31.
159. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 182.
160. Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, 130.
161. All three entries can be found in SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 56r. William is not given a last name. It does not say that he was deceased yet it does not appear that his fine was to be the full 6s 8d. The page is ripped but the required sum certainly was 5s.
162. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, 175–6.

163. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power*, 181.
164. David Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389–1547' (PhD diss., University of York, 1995), 297.
165. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 138v.
166. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 138v.
167. There is no record of Hugh Elyot in the Palmers, but the result of the lack of extant records does not preclude his membership.
168. It is unclear if Rees Griffith lived with his father at this time. It is certainly possible, for other gentry and noble families had their heirs and families remain with them after they came of age. For example, Edward, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, had his son and heir living with him even after the marriage and subsequent birth of his grandson. Barbara J. Harris, *Edward Stafford: Third Duke of Buckingham, 1478–1521* (Stanford, 1986), 45.
169. For a discussion and many examples of friendship and support among gentry and their servants, see Fleming, 'Household Servants', 27–9, 31.
170. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 29r; LB/5/3/9, f. 15v.
171. SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 67r, 164v.
172. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 37r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 19r, 20r.
173. SA: LB/5/3/5, ff. 41v–42r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 28v, 31r.
174. Unfortunately, Wogan's will is short, outlining his desired place of burial and naming his wife as his executrix, and no additional information about their household can be gleaned from it. TNA: PROB 11/39/302.
175. For suggestions as to why guild membership was popular among the regular clergy see Martin Heale, 'Urban Guilds and the Religious Orders in Late Medieval England', in *The Urban Church in Late Medieval England: Essays from the 2017 Proceedings of the Harlaxton Medieval Symposium*, ed. David Harry and Christian Steer (Donington, 2019), 179–98; Rachael Harkes, 'Joining a Fraternity in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow, c. 1250–1551' (PhD diss., University of Durham, 2021), [chapter 3](#).
176. Harkes, 'Joining a Fraternity', 121–5.
177. For a history of the two houses, see: Lionel Butler and Chris Given-Wilson, *Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain* (London, 1979), 287–9.
178. SA: LB/5/3/6, ff. 41v, 42r.
179. The following houses had lay servants begin membership payments: Abergavenny, Bath, Brecon, Brewood, Bromfield, Buildwas, Chester, Cirencester, Evesham, Gloucester (St Peter and St Paul), Great Malvern, Halesowen, Leicester, Leominster, Llanthony *Prima*, Llanthony *Secunda*, Nuneaton, Reading, Tewkesbury and Tintern. They are found across the archive. For an example, see SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 23v, 26r.
180. For an overview of the households of superiors, see Martin Heale, 'Abbots' Households in Late Medieval England', in *The Elite Household in England, 1100–1500: Proceedings of the 2016 Harlaxton Medieval Symposium*, ed. Christopher M. Woolgar (Donington, 2018), 258–76.
181. Ethel Fegan, ed., *The Journal of Prior William More* (London, 1919), 11–12.
182. Heale, 'Abbots' Households in Late Medieval England', 266–76.
183. SA: LB/5/3/10.
184. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 42r.
185. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 42r.

186. SA: LB/5/3/1.
187. SA: LB/5/3/25, m. 1.
188. The lordship of Ludlow was tied to the Crown from the ascension of Edward IV. Alongside Ludlow (which was not a Marcher lordship), the majority of lordships in the Marches were in Crown hands in the early sixteenth century. William Rees, 'The Union of England and Wales [with a transcript of the Act of Union]', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1937), 41.
189. There are four individuals from the household in the registers, but one is a repeat. SA: LB/5/1/2, mm. 1–3.
190. This pertains to the years for which records survive. The records are incomplete across every decade but especially for the first part of the 1490s. The records survive more fully for the early sixteenth century. SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 118r, 130v, 148r, 183r. For household numbers, see Woolgar, *The Great Household*, 10.
191. SA: LB/5/3/3.
192. For Arthur's household, see SA: LB/5/3/2, and for Henry's household see LB/5/3/4–8; LB/5/1/3–4.
193. For example, Henry Clerc and William ap Thomas, SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 84v, 184v.
194. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 48r.
195. SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 84r, 118v, 148v; LB/5/3/5 f. 31v.
196. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 35r.
197. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 35v.
198. Sean Cunningham, *Prince Arthur: The Tudor King Who Never Was* (Stroud, 2016), 125, 202–3. Howard was the chief mourner at Arthur's funeral: TNA: LC 2/1.
199. The Duke of Buckingham's household provides an excellent example of this: Harris, *Edward Stafford*, chapter 4.
200. Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33, no. 4 (October 1994), 443.
201. SA: LB/5/3/8, ff. 6v–7v; LB/5/1/3, ff. 2–4; LB/5/1/4, f. 1.
202. Woolgar, *The Great Household*, 20.
203. Some of these are simply identified as servant or not even given a position in their entries in the guild records. Additional information has been gathered from household accounts of Edward Stafford: Harris, *Edward Stafford*, appendix A.
204. Margaret Geddyng, a gentlewoman, was in charge of the nursery and at least two other gentlewomen assisted her. Harris, *Edward Stafford*, 47.
205. SA: LB/5/3/8, ff. 6v, 7v. For more on the riding/foreign household versus the great household, see Woolgar, *The Great Household*, 15.
206. SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 1.
207. Harris, *Edward Stafford*, 93.
208. Harris, *Edward Stafford*, 77; Carole Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham: 1394–1521* (Cambridge, 1988), 88.
209. Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, 98.
210. Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, 98.
211. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', 127; Audrey M. Thorstad, 'There and Back Again: The Hospitality and Consumption of a Sixteenth-Century English Travelling Household', in *Royal and Elite Households in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: More Than Just a Castle*, ed. Theresa Earenfight (Leiden, 2018), 368.

212. Harris, *Edward Stafford*, 82.
213. Harris, *Edward Stafford*, 82.
214. Harris, *Edward Stafford*, 90.
215. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 52v; LB/5/1/3, f. 6.
216. SA: LB/5/3/8, ff. 6v, 7v.
217. Harris, *Edward Stafford*, 50; John Gage, 'Extracts from the Household Book of Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham', *Archaeologia*, 25 (1834), 320–21.
218. SA: LB/5/1/3, mm. 2, 4, 5; LB/5/1/4, m. 2.
219. SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 25r–v; LB/5/3/5, ff. 32r, 53r; LB/5/3/7, f. 50v; LB/5/1/3, m. 7.
220. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 127v.
221. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r; LB/5/3/6, 51r; LB/5/3/7, f. 68v.
222. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r; LB/5/3/5, f. 74r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 50v, 51r; LB/5/3/7, f. 68v; LB/5/3/8, f. 11r.
223. SA: LB/5/3/5, ff. 73v, 74r.
224. SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 63r, 84r.
225. Jeri L. McIntosh, *From Heads of Household to Heads of State: The Preaccession Households of Mary and Elizabeth Tudor 1516–1558* (New York, 2009), 197.

Chapter 3

Urban governance

Town and guild were rarely separate entities in late medieval England. In many urban centres, the majority of governing council members were simultaneously part of the local leading fraternity, or, for those without self-government, a guild would act as a 'surrogate town council'.¹ By the late fifteenth century, the masters of leading urban fraternities were frequently recently retired members of the ruling elite. In Norwich, the outgoing mayor routinely became the master of the Guild of St George, while in Worcester, where the role of mayor did not exist until 1621, the high bailiff became master of the Holy Trinity Guild upon his retirement.² Should one wish to attain high civic status, the holding of office within a town guild was akin to fulfilling the necessary civic offices. While slightly less regimented in terms of the exact stage at which one was expected to occupy such a role, any member of the Forty-Eight at Worcester (the lower chamber of government, often referred to as 'the commons') who wished to move up into the upper chamber of government – the elite known as the Twenty-Four – was required to have held the office of steward of Worcester's Holy Trinity Guild.³ The normal course of action for Coventry's hopeful elite was to join the local Corpus Christi Guild before obtaining junior civic roles (such as chamberlain or warden) and then progressing on to the associated 'senior' Holy Trinity Guild.⁴

In Ludlow, like countless other towns, the local fraternity was intrinsically connected with the town's governmental structure: the Palmers' Guild's officers and a selection of its brethren made up Ludlow's civic elite, frequently occupying the post of bailiff and sitting as members of Ludlow's councils – the Twelve and the Twenty-Five.⁵ Across late medieval England, local leading fraternities demonstrably played an important role in

shaping the experiences of those who would go on to hold the highest civic offices.⁶ The importance of local guilds to urban governments is indicative of the social and political nature of such institutions, as well as the pervasiveness of late medieval lay religious activity throughout society. Such examples are, of course, not new to historians – and this is precisely the point. It has been shown repeatedly that the symbiotic association between these two types of institutions was a constituent part of urban life in medieval England. The frequency with which this happened lends weight to the existence, and importance, of institutional relationships between civic government and guild in urban environments.

But, rather than focusing solely on the Palmers' relationship with governance of Ludlow, a more pertinent question is whether the guild could enjoy similar relationships with the civic elite of the towns from which it frequently drew membership. Given the dominance of urban inhabitants among the guilds – two-thirds of its brethren were from towns or cities – the issue of why urban inhabitants chose to join becomes important. Moreover, the current historical understanding of the relationship between local guilds and urban governance, outlined earlier, makes this question even more prescient: if each urban centre possessed their own guild that was associated with the urban elite, what meaning, if any, did membership of a national guild hold in the governance of towns and cities further afield? The membership records of the Palmers' Guild present an opportunity to understand the place of a national guild within the localised power structures that existed outside of the guild's own 'home base' of Ludlow. This chapter will consider the ways in which membership of the guild was viewed, understood, and used by local elites for social and political purposes, from which assessment it is possible to draw broad conclusions about the meanings of joining a guild. The prevalence of membership, the stage at which civic officers joined the guild, and the networks among those urban elites all demonstrate a deep-seated attachment to the Ludlow guild. National guilds such as the Palmers evidently held an important role in political communities across medieval England.

The term 'urban elite' is a fluid one, and is used by historians to discuss a range of high status individuals, sometimes determined by their level of wealth, but usually by their involvement within the governing structures of a town or city.⁷ The present analysis will concentrate solely on those involved with urban government, based on the surviving records of each city: they range from bailiffs and sheriffs through to members of common councils, mayors and aldermen. Given that the Palmers were extraordinarily pervasive throughout the Midlands and Welsh Marches,

the major urban centres within those regions (Shrewsbury, Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol and Coventry) will each be examined in the ensuing discussion, setting out the structure of their governance and their relationship to local and external religious guilds. But the Palmers' Guild also drew membership from much further afield and so the final section turns to the case studies of Reading and London.

Shrewsbury

Shrewsbury, the county town of Shropshire, is located some thirty miles from Ludlow – a similar distance to that between Ludlow and Worcester. In the late Middle Ages, particularly in the fourteenth century, Shrewsbury dominated the urban scene in Shropshire, with its key position on the River Severn encouraging prosperity through trade and production, particularly that of the wool trade.⁸ Ludlow and Shrewsbury were competitors as centres of the wool trade, but Ludlow never reached the same importance or level of wealth as the county town.⁹ Regular commercial and political interactions between the two centres were characteristic of their relationship, partially encouraged by the position of Ludlow on the main road between Shrewsbury and Hereford.¹⁰ We have already seen that there was regular expenditure on brethren of Shrewsbury by the guild stewards in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but was there any connection with the governance of the city?¹¹

A full picture is difficult to reconstruct due to the patterns of survival of both the guild and Shrewsbury town records. The governance of Shrewsbury developed over the course of the late Middle Ages. In 1398, twelve men were elected to assist two bailiffs in governing the town. By the mid-fifteenth century, this had expanded to a council of twelve aldermen and twenty-four common councillors to work alongside the bailiffs.¹² By the early sixteenth century, the corporation of Shrewsbury comprised twenty-four aldermen, forty-eight common councillors, a mayor, and two bailiffs.¹³ Each year, the bailiffs cast lots to select two men who were then in charge of selecting twenty-five electors. The electors in turn elected two new bailiffs and their deputies, two coroners, six assessors, two sub-bailiffs, and six auditors.¹⁴ The election records that survive contain the names of bailiffs, electors and those that held annual offices, rather than the aldermen and common councillors, but the twenty-five electors were presumably drawn from the common council.

Taking the election records for a decade (between 1497 and 1507), there were at least forty members of Shrewsbury civic elite who were involved with the Palmers in the early sixteenth century (see [Table 3.1](#)).

At least one of the bailiffs was a Palmer for five of those years, and there were – at a minimum – seven Palmers each year who were either part of the electoral body or were elected to one of the offices of the government. In 1501, sixteen of the forty-five men involved in the selecting of corporation officers were either Palmers or would become one in the ensuing few years.¹⁵

It is difficult to gauge the continued involvement of Palmers in the annual electoral process and holding of offices such as auditor or coroner, given the absence of records. The office of bailiff is recorded, however, and a closer examination of Shrewsbury's sixteenth-century governance indicates that the Palmers who enrolled in the first years of the 1500s continued to hold office: between 1521 and 1531, at least one Palmer held the office of bailiff for seven of those years. This was partly due to the dominance of three Palmers, Thomas Hosier, William Bayly and David Ireland, who held the office for three (Hosier) and two years (Bayly and Ireland) within that period.¹⁶

A small amount of information can be gleaned about aldermen: the corporation expected aldermen to reside within the town and readily removed those from the aldermanic bench who disobeyed.¹⁷ The Palmer Richard Lister, who was an alderman, was removed from his position in 1516 as he was no longer residing in Shrewsbury.¹⁸ Lister had worked his way through various offices within Shrewsbury's government, acting as coroner, auditor and bailiff, then becoming a Palmer, and at that stage becoming an alderman.¹⁹

There was no clear pattern as to when these men joined the Ludlow guild. Twenty-two of the civic elite became Palmers after first being active in civic governance (fifty-five per cent). Most did so during the time in which they were frequently involved in the election of, or were indeed one of, the town's officers. Roger Phillips was an elector in 1501, joined the Palmers in 1503 and acted as an elector in that same year, and then continued to be involved in civic government until at least 1512.²¹ For three men, their first year participating in the selecting of borough officials coincided with when they enrolled in the Palmers (seven-and-a-half per cent of the total known Palmers in civic governance).²² Of the remaining fifteen men, twelve of them joined the Palmers before assuming office (thirty per cent) and three are unable to be analysed due to the state of surviving records.²³ While guild membership was common across the civic elite, the absence of any clear correspondence with joining at particular times in their civic careers suggests that they joined primarily for social, trade and pious benefits. This stands in stark contrast to Worcester and Gloucester.

Table 3.1: Palmers who held civic office in Shrewsbury

Name	Initial involvement with Palmers' Guild²⁰	First known year involved in governance
David Ireland	1511/12	1501 (Assessor)
Thomas Mitton	1473/4	1500 (Bailiff)
William Mitton	1505/6	1504 (Bailiff)
Richard Lister	1508/9	1500 (Coroner)
Thomas Trentham Senior	1485/6	1500 (Bailiff)
Thomas Trentham Junior	1507/8	1504 (Elector)
Thomas Hosier	1503/4	1503 (Elector)
William Bayly	1505/6	1505 (Assessor)
Richard Brickdale	1504/5	1530 (Bailiff)
Richard Hussey	1501/2	1534 (Bailiff)
Roger Don	1486/7	1500 (Assessor)
Richard Phillips	1486/7	1500 (Assessor)
Thomas Colly	1503/4	1500 (Elector)
Richard Wortley	1486/7	1500 (Elector)
Thomas Marshall	1506/7	1500 (Elector)
Hugh Walker	1505/6	1500 (Elector)
Richard Aspley	1497/8	1497 (Elector)
Richard Hill	1504/5	1501 (Elector)
John Forster	1503/4	1501 (Elector)
Richard Aleyn	1503/4	1501 (Elector)
Thomas Broughton	1485/6	1501 (Elector)
Thomas ap Jenkyn	1503/4	1501 (Elector)
Henry Hopley	1503/4	1501 (Elector)
Roger Phillips	1503/4	1501 (Elector)
Walter Wetnell	1504/5	1501 (Elector)
Hugh Manning	1504/5	1501 (Elector)
David Baker	1504/5	1501 (Elector)
John Montgomery	1503/4	1501 (Assessor)
John Barbour	1502/3	1501 (Sub-bailiff)
William Hochekes	1515/16	1501 (Deputy to the bailiff)
William Hosier	1504/5	1501 (Auditor)
Thomas Baker	1505/6	1502 (Elector)
John Corbet	1502/3	1503 (Elector)
Richard Botfield	1507/8	1503 (Elector)
Hugh Blanwey	1509/10	1504 (Deputy to the bailiff)
Edmund Weale	1503/4	1505 (Elector)
Hugh Hill	1504/5	1507 (Elector)
Hugh Minsterley	1503/4	1508 (Elector)
John Fletcher	1505/6	1508 (Elector)
William Clerke	1508/9	1508 (Elector)

Worcester

In Worcester, the scarcity of extant records likewise precludes a full understanding of the membership overlap between the town's government and the Palmers, but a partial picture can be reconstructed through an examination of the bailiffs of the town. A *cursus honorum* existed within medieval Worcester's government, where the career of a civic office holder would follow a series of stages, ascending in seniority, based on the town's dual-assembly system (see Figure 3.1).²⁴ The lower assembly, the so-called Forty-Eight, was elected from among the citizens of the town. Each year they chose from among their number a representative to take on the position of low chamberlain. The more senior, and select, council was that of the Twenty-Four. Generally, the low chamberlain would be promoted to this group when a position became available, provided also that he had served as steward of the Holy Trinity Guild.²⁵ The Twenty-Four were the primary authority within the town's governance. Mirroring their junior counterparts, the Twenty-Four would annually elect a high chamberlain and the two officers would cooperate. Once an aspiring office holder had attained this position, it was then a fairly straightforward progression up the civic ladder. Within a year or two of their election, they would be eligible for the position of low bailiff, then to serve a first term as an alderman, followed by high bailiff, and, finally, a second term as alderman.

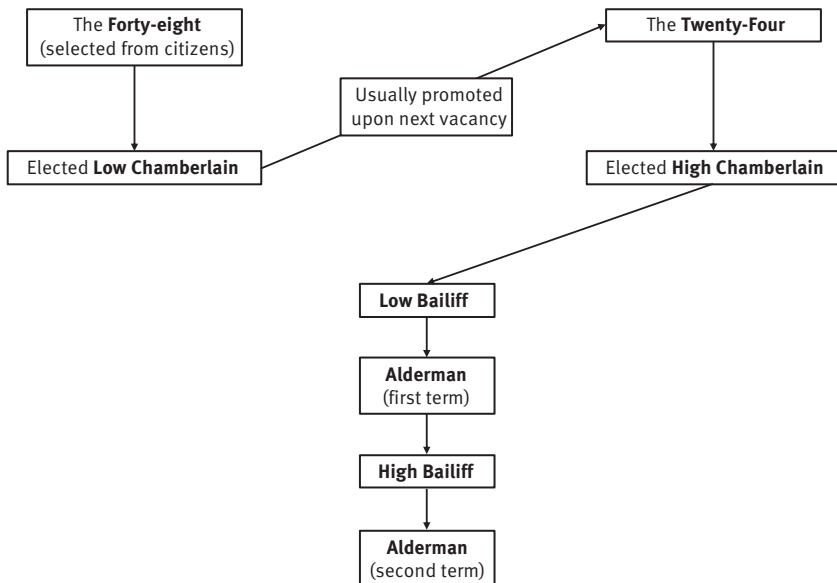


Figure 3.1 Structure of Worcester's civic government up to incorporation in 1555.

Presumably the aldermen operated on a junior/senior basis, as with the offices of chamberlain and bailiff, although it was also possible to serve in one office on several occasions.²⁶

Within this system, the position of bailiff was one of great importance. With no mayoral office at this time, the bailiff was one of the most influential figures in medieval Worcester – even if it was not the most senior position. This is, for example, suggested by a surviving manuscript chronicle from Worcester, created in the first half of the sixteenth century, which arranges its narrative around the individuals who held the office of bailiff.²⁷ Such a sentiment is also reflected in modern writing on the town's government, as Alan Dyer described the bailiffs as 'the chief executive officers [who] were much the most important of the city dignitaries'.²⁸ This importance derived from the wide-ranging responsibilities they held, which included both legal and fiscal obligations.²⁹ By virtue of the importance of this office, a study of the bailiffs proves instructive; in all likelihood, anyone who was seriously civically minded would have held the lower of the two offices at least once. But it should also be noted that membership of the Twenty-Four was required before assuming office. Financial stability was surely a prerequisite for admission into this group – a payment of 16s 8d was the standard fee to take office, although this could be increased if the city needed extra income.³⁰ Moreover, for positions with single-year terms such as bailiff, the incumbent would need to be secure in their industry and their income for it to be practical and viable to cease their usual business activities and take on what was, effectively, a full-time responsibility. Bailiffs did not take a wage from the city per se, but instead were remunerated from the money they generated in that role.³¹

Yet, once again underlining the importance of the role and, indeed, its usefulness as a tool of study, the list of bailiffs in the chronicle identifies every holder of the office between 1483 and 1578, thereby providing us with an unbroken and readily accessible view of who occupied the role – something we do not have for the other offices or, indeed, either of the two councils. While using only one office to view the relationship between the Palmers and Worcester's government does not provide a whole picture, the bailiffs nonetheless offer a valuable avenue through which we might understand the relationship of urban elite with outside organizations, due to their intimate and prominent place within town governance.

Comparing this list of bailiffs to the various iterations of the Palmers' membership lists from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries allows us to make judgements about the role that the guild played in the *cursus honorum* outlined previously; if, indeed, it played a role at all. It is worth considering at what stage in their career a bailiff joined the guild. Between 1483 (the year the list of bailiffs commences) and 1537 (the last year a

known Palmer can be identified in the office), eleven Palmers were either high or low bailiff in Worcester (see Table 3.2). Most of these men held both the high and low offices; exceptions to this trend (at least as far as we can see in the years in the list) are John Payne (high bailiff in 1490), John Hall (low bailiff in 1519), Stephen Collier (low bailiff in 1530) and, finally, John Williams (low bailiff in 1537).³² The latter three seem unlikely to have advanced to the higher position during their career, or perhaps died before they had the chance. The anomaly, John Payne, is likely to have held the lower office before the list starts in 1483, however Payne and Thomas Green (another early office holder as low bailiff in 1493) took that role *before* they began their membership payments – in 1507 and 1508 respectively. Overall, bailiffs consisted of three-and-a-half per cent of the known Palmers of Worcester.³³ The enrolment in the guild of eleven bailiffs out of a total of fifty-two individuals who held the office between these years clearly demonstrates that guild membership was not an essential part of the local *cursus honorum*, but this does not mean that we are unable to say anything about the role of the guild in a less official capacity.

In the years for which we have this information, therefore, Palmers occupied at least one of the two positions for thirteen years (excluding Payne and Green). Indeed, in 1523 and 1525, both bailiffs were Palmers: William Sargeant as low bailiff and Richard Cam as high bailiff in 1523; and Walter Stone as low bailiff and John Colman as high bailiff in 1525. The 1520s saw the presence of the Palmers in the bailiff's position with the most consistency: from 1519 to 1529, a Palmer almost always held

Table 3.2: Palmers who held the office of bailiff in Worcester

Name	Initial Membership		High bailiff
	Payment	Low Bailiff	
John Payne	1507	-	1490
Thomas Green	1508	1493	1497
Edward Crompe	1505	1510	1513
John Hall	1511	1519	1522
Richard Cam	1499	1520	1523
John Colman	1507	1521	1525
William Sargeant	1503	1523	1527
Richard Bilford	1503	1524	1528
Walter Stone	1504	1525	1529
Stephen Collier	1503	1530	-
John Williams	1506	1537	-

at least one of the positions. The concentrated period of these officials is revealing of the involvement of the urban elite of Worcester with the Palmers. Little value can be attributed to the fact that none of Worcester's bailiffs initiated payments to the Palmers before 1499 – only four years of records survive for the years between 1485 and 1489. The same is true for the period after 1510 (after which date there is only one surviving riding book, alongside receipts) and therefore the period in which Worcester bailiffs enrolled correlates with the surviving documentation. The prominence of guild membership among the bailiffs may very well have extended into the 1530s and 1540s, but identification of this is impossible, as the bailiffs most likely would have joined in the 1510s, given that the average gap between enrolment and the holding of office (excluding Payne and Green) was a little over eighteen-and-a-half years.³⁴

The office of low bailiff would have taken a considerable time to work towards, and so William Sargeant, who became bailiff in 1523, would have been at the earliest stages of his trade career when he joined the Palmers in 1503 – or may not have yet begun it.³⁵ He was not alone in this trend, as his colleagues and fellow brethren Richard Cam, John Colman, Richard Bifford, Walter Stone, Stephen Collier and John Williams all began payments for membership of the Palmers some twenty-plus years before reaching the highest stages of civic office in Worcester.³⁶ It would appear, therefore, that the Palmers' Guild was an organisation for junior members of the hopeful elite in Worcestershire's county town. In much the same way that Coventry's Corpus Christi Guild provided a space for aspiring young men – albeit local – the Ludlow guild acted in a similar capacity for Worcester.³⁷ Of course, the key difference is that the guild was not based in the city, yet it is remarkable that the guild has consistent membership among the bailiffs of the town. While it cannot be ignored that people joined the Palmers' Guild for multiple and overlapping reasons, the guild was respected enough to garner the initial enrolment of members from the future civic elite; indeed, the guild continued to maintain the interest of these bailiffs-to-come, who consistently paid off their membership fees well into the late 1510s, if not longer.³⁸ The key aspect of this sustained relationship with the Palmers was that of accessibility, afforded by the system of payment by a series of instalments, wherein individuals could contribute a chosen amount towards the full membership fee (6s 8d) annually, allowing flexibility to change the amount paid each year or pause payments without penalty. Some bailiffs, like William Sargeant, gave the same amount of money each year, consistently lowering the outstanding balance owed to the guild until his debt was cleared.³⁹ Others were more sporadic, demonstrating their fluctuating financial situations or personal interest, like Richard Cam's initial payment of 20d, which was followed

by payments between 12d and 20d, on and off, from 1503 to 1517.⁴⁰ The men in question, while they might one day attain a comfortable level of wealth, joined the Palmers at the beginning of their careers and, therefore, were less likely to have accumulated the necessary level of disposable income for membership of guilds that required the full fee upfront, in addition to an annual contribution. The Palmers' system of fee payments provided flexibility, giving aspiring men the opportunity to join a prestigious guild, increase their status and reinforce ties with those of similar inclinations in Worcester – and possibly those from further afield.

Gloucester

The Palmers' role in any village, town or city was never, of course, identical: the patterns of membership found in each place were not replicated to the exact degree elsewhere. Outside its religious context, the guild served differing social and political roles, and this observation is key to understanding its place in late medieval society. Yet comparisons nevertheless can be drawn in certain aspects, and the situation of the bailiwick in Worcester and the shrievalty of Gloucester is a notable example of guild membership occupying a similar role in two different towns. Gloucester's town government was restructured when it was incorporated in 1483, thereby creating the office of mayor, who was assisted by a town clerk, two sheriffs, twelve aldermen, four stewards and a common council. Despite the increased number of offices and the associated rise in levels of participation from a wider base of citizenry, the town continued in much the same way as it had before, with the power of decision-making being limited to the same group of men.⁴¹ The twelve aldermen held their positions for the duration of their lives and subsequent vacancies were filled by those who already sat on the lower governmental councils.⁴² In the early sixteenth century, only half of those men who served as steward became a sheriff (with several years between the two positions), and then, once again, only half of that group of men became mayor, usually five or six years after holding office as sheriff.⁴³ It was at some point between the office of sheriff and mayor that an individual would be elected to the aldermanic bench but, due to the chance nature of mortality among the sitting aldermen, there was no set timeline for entrance.⁴⁴ Membership of the Palmers was, however, a prominent shared trait among this group of men in the sixteenth century.

The office of sheriff was the route to mayoral office and a position on the aldermanic bench, and therefore the key to the carefully guarded civic power of Gloucester. It is here that we find almost five per cent of the

Gloucester Palmers – a comparable figure to that of Worcester’s bailiffs.⁴⁵ Between 1483, when the role of sheriff for Gloucester was created by a charter from Richard III, and 1540, nearing the end of the guild’s life, eleven members of the Palmers held the office of sheriff at least once (see Table 3.3).⁴⁶ Five Palmers held both the offices of sheriff and mayor, as well as holding one of the offices on multiple occasions.⁴⁷ A few even held both offices twice, such as John Semys, who was sheriff in 1520 and 1525, followed by mayor in 1528 and 1535.⁴⁸ Much like Worcester, these men were, for the most part, joining the Palmers’ Guild at least a decade before assuming high office.⁴⁹ The Palmers were clearly occupying a similar role in Gloucester as in Worcester, providing a space for men at the early stages of their civic office.

While twelve members are a small proportion of the Gloucester brethren, an examination of five of these men reveals the nature of membership. Thomas Osborn, John Rastell, John Semys, Henry Marmion, John Rawlens and Lewis ap Rice were all active members of civic life in the 1520s and 1530s. The six were aldermen at overlapping times and made up half of the twelve-man bench during 1532/3. In any given year in the decade between 1523 and 1533, between a quarter and a half of Gloucester’s top governing officers were members of the Ludlow guild. No study has been carried out to assess, in any detail, the role of the aldermen within Gloucester during the sixteenth century, although one important conclusion can be drawn: appointments were made based on wealth.⁵⁰ Aldermen Osborn, Rastell, Semys, Marmion, Rawlens and Lewis ap Rees, all of whom joined the Palmers in the first decade of the sixteenth century, had become some of the wealthiest men of Gloucester by the 1530s.⁵¹ Each man was a Palmer during the time he was working his way through the series of civic offices,

Table 3.3: Palmers who held civic office in Gloucester

Name	Membership	Civic offices
John Poole	1498	1486 (Mayor), 1486–1503 (Alderman)
Walter Beech	1503	1504, 1517 (Sheriff)
Thomas Osborn	1499	1512, 1522 (Sheriff), 1526 (Mayor), 1522–1541 (Alderman)
Ralph Halsey	1505	1515 (Sheriff) 1517–19 (Alderman)
John Rastell	1505	1523 (Sheriff), 1527 (Mayor) 1524–33 (Alderman)
John Semys	1503	1520, 1525 (Sheriff), 1528, 1535 (Mayor) 1523–40 (Alderman)
Henry Marmion	1507	1521, 1528 (Sheriff), 1533 (Mayor) 1530–40 (Alderman)
Henry French	1503	1524 (Sheriff)
Lewis ap Rees	1509	1529, 1532 (Sheriff) 1532–3 (Alderman)
William Michel	1515	1540 (Sheriff), 1549 (Mayor) 1545–55 (Alderman)
John Alen	1501	1503, 1512 (Sheriff), 1517–24 (Alderman)
John Rawlens	1508	1514, 1519 (Sheriff), 1524 (Mayor), 1519–32 (Alderman)

acting as steward, sheriff and mayor before becoming an experienced advisor to his successors in each of those offices. The Ludlow guild was a common denominator among members of Gloucester's government, acting as an additional enforcement of pre-existing networks while simultaneously providing connections between Gloucester's inhabitants who were outside of the civic elite. Unlike the most prominent religious guild in Gloucester, that of the Holy Trinity, which drew its membership exclusively from the ruling elite, the Palmers provided these men with a network of individuals from a variety of differing occupations and trades.⁵² The Gloucester brethren included skinners, smiths, bakers, cooks, tanners, drapers, cardmakers, cobblers and mercers, while parish priests, canons, monks and vicars represented the ecclesiastical community of Gloucester.

Bristol

Similarities existed among the aldermen in nearby Bristol: in this case, seven aldermen were Palmers. Bristol aldermen held wide-ranging powers in governing the city, including holding a court with the mayor, acting as Justices of the Peace, and overseeing gaol delivery.⁵³ Given that the aldermen were key members of the civic elite, it is unsurprising to see a number of their members engaging in further localised communal activity – in this case, membership of the Palmers – outside of their civic roles. As in Gloucester, a large cross-section of Bristol society was accounted for in the Palmers' membership lists, and so, for the aldermen, guild membership provided the opportunity to reaffirm their status as instruments of the community under the auspices of the social rhetoric provided by religious guilds.

In addition to the seven aldermen, another twenty-three members of Bristol's civic elite in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century were Palmers, primarily those who began their civic careers after 1500 (Table 3.4). For the purposes of this study, the civic elite of Bristol have been taken to include the chamberlains, bailiffs, sheriffs, mayors, aldermen and MPs. Of these, the shrievalty was the office most commonly held by members of the guild. Between 1500 and 1510, with the exception of 1502/3, one of the two sheriffs was always a Palmer.⁵⁵ In 1507/8, both sheriffs – Simon Gerveys and John Edwards – were Palmers. This trend was somewhat less pronounced in the following two decades, with Palmers in the shrievalty for a total of five and four years respectively. The sheriffs were among the most visible officers within the burgess community of the town, maintaining peace and stability within the city walls, and managing the city's gaol

Table 3.4: Palmers who held civic office in Bristol⁵⁴

Name	Year of membership	First known year in office
Robert Thorne	1487	1503 (Sheriff)
William Jeffreys	1487	1504 (Sheriff)
Simon Gerveys	1487	1507 (Sheriff)
John Bagot*	1489	1466 (MP)
John Penke*	1497	1495 (Alderman)
John Matthews	1499	1508 (Sheriff)
John Elyot	1500	1496 (Bailiff)
John Hall	1500	1518 (Sheriff)
William Rowley+	1500	1539 (Sheriff)
John Esterfield*	1501	1485 (MP)
John Wilkyns	1501	1509 (Sheriff)
John Ware	1501	1514 (Sheriff)
John Harris	1503	1505 (Sheriff)
Richard Tonell*	1503	1514 (Sheriff)
John Reep	1503	1517 (Sheriff)
David Laurence	1503	1526 (Sheriff)
John Edwards*	1504	1507 (Sheriff)
George Monoux	1505	1490 (Bailiff)
William Vaughan	1505	1515 (Sheriff)
Humphrey Bosgrove	1505	1516 (Chamberlain)
Gilbert Cogan	1505	1522 (Sheriff)
Richard Abingdon	1506	1515 (Sheriff)
Robert Aventry	1506	1520 (Sheriff)
Thomas Pernaunt	1507	1501 (Sheriff)
Thomas More+	1507	1536 (Sheriff)
John Vaughan	1508	1498 (Bailiff)
John Smythe*	1509	1532 (Sheriff)
John Davis	1509	1523 (Sheriff)
John Hutton*	1510	1511 (Sheriff)

* Attained office of alderman

+ Potential match: long period of time between enrolment and office.

and the monthly court. The importance of the office to Bristol's governance is attested in the vivid depiction of the first ever sheriff (after the city was granted county status in 1373) in Robert Ricart's fifteenth-century text, *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*. Flanked by two lower offices of civic serjeants (visually depicted as smaller men), Bristol's sheriff wears the red robes of his office and raises his hand to suggest his authority.⁵⁶ The mayor of Bristol (whose induction ceremony was also depicted in Ricart's *Kalendar*) likewise held a multiplicity of roles, and acted as the king's

representative in the city, a Justice of the Peace and Justice of Gaol delivery, while simultaneously holding his own court, supervising the city's trades and administering justice within the Bristol Staple Court.⁵⁷ An office with an increasing role in civic politics in the early Tudor period, and respected by the community of Bristol, the mayor presided at common council meetings and meetings of the aldermen.⁵⁸ Eight of Bristol's mayors between 1487 and 1542 were Palmers, three of them holding office twice.⁵⁹ Membership of the Palmers, from as early as 1487, was therefore a shared experience of Bristol's highest civic elite. The frequency with which sheriffs were Palmers in the 1510s aligns with heightened levels of membership of the guild within Bristol. The Palmers had, since the fourteenth century, drawn small numbers from Bristol into the fraternity, but membership rose in 1501 and, thenceforth, the city remained a strong centre of guild membership throughout the sixteenth century (Maps 0.3–0.11): there was an increase of fifty per cent of membership from Bristol between the 1485–9 registers of admission and the 1505–7 registers.⁶⁰

The increase in elite brethren from Bristol displays a similar regard to the importance of guild membership, at a certain time in the elite life cycle, as seen in Gloucester and Worcester. But there are, naturally, differences resulting from circumstances unique to Bristol. After 1499, the structure of civic government within Bristol changed. The most junior office of the elite, that of the bailiff, was removed, resulting in the youngest members of the common council turning to the office of sheriff instead.⁶¹ After 1499 a number of people became sheriff early on in their career: Robert Elyot and John Drewis may have been as young as twenty-one when they first took up their posts.⁶² The tendency to hold civic office earlier in Bristol than in other cities explains some aspects of the trends of membership identified above. Unlike in Gloucester and Worcester (and Coventry, as will be discussed shortly), where individuals often joined the Palmers some ten to twenty years before assuming a position among the upper ranks of the governing elite, the majority of men in Bristol joined the guild much closer in time to assuming the office of sheriff – especially during the first two decades of the sixteenth century, when most became sheriff within ten years of joining the guild. Despite the closer temporal relationship between civic office and guild membership in Bristol than other cities, the Palmers were likewise providing an opportunity for members of the elite to expand their religious and social activities. Members of the elite, such as John Bagot, gifted chalices to the Palmers, while annual social gatherings, evinced by the guild's regular expenditure on victuals, took place in Bristol annually for brethren.⁶³

Coventry

Coventry, the fifth location under investigation here, was an active centre of guild membership. Fifty-four members of the town's civic elite enrolled in the Palmers between 1499 and 1515 (Table 3.5). For Coventry, like Bristol, the relatively high involvement of the civic elite in the fraternity can be more fully constructed than for Worcester, Gloucester and Shrewsbury, due to a healthy survival of city records. The *Coventry Leet Book*, which records a range of individuals who participated in urban governance, including on the leet jury and in the offices of warden of the leet, chamberlain, bailiff, sheriff and mayor, is the primary source utilised here. The average time between enrolment in the Palmers and the first role within civic government was just over ten years. The difference here, which must be acknowledged, is that a higher number of the civic elite joined the Palmers after they had already held office. These were the minority, but their enrolment shifts the demographic dynamic of Coventry's members, being a mix of experienced and aspiring civic officers. For Coventry members, therefore, the guild provided a different arena for socialisation from that of the local Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi fraternities, which were predisposed to young and veteran civic officers respectively.

The civic elite of Coventry by no means limited themselves to the guild at Ludlow or even those that operated within the city. Understandably, in geographic terms, the elite of Coventry frequently graced the annual admission registers of Stratford's guild of the Holy Cross. For the Stratford guild, 1497/8 saw the enrolment of John Hadden, former bailiff and future mayor, who joined the Palmers in the following decade.⁶⁵ In 1506/7, Julian Nethermyll and Richard Kemsey, soon-to-be wardens of the leet, joined

Table 3.5: Palmers who held civic office in Coventry⁶⁴

Name	Year of membership	First year of office (incl. leet jury)
William Aleyn	1506	1519 (Town Crier)
Thomas Bagot	1505	1472 (Chamberlain)
William Bayly	1501	1538 (Leet Juror)
John Baker	1507	1514 (Chamberlain)
Thomas Banwell	1506	1513 (Leet Juror)
John Bonde	1506	1509 (Warden)
Thomas Bothe	1505	1517 (Warden)
Nicholas Burwey	1505	1499 (Warden)
Richard Burwey	1506	1514 (Sheriff)
William Cook	1508	1515 (Warden)
William Coton	1511	1519 (Warden)

(Continued)

Table 3.5: Continued

Name	Year of Membership	First year of office (incl. Leet jury)
John Dove	1506	1471 (Leet Juror)
Thomas Ford	1504	1501 (Warden)
Thomas Gopsill	1503	1511 (Chamberlain)
John Hadden	1505	1480 (Member of the Forty-Eight)
Edmund Hadley	1506	1505 (Warden)
John Hardwen	1505	1500 (Warden)
Richard Hassall	1498	1496 (one of the 'mayor's council')
Thomas Heryng	1511	1522 (Leet Juror)
Richard Kemsey	1505	1510 (Warden)
Henry Kylby	1515	1524 (Warden)
Robert Kyrbyn	1504	1524 (Chamberlain)
Thomas Lee	1501	1515 (Chamberlain)
Richard Marler	1499	1500 (Warden)
Roger Mocklow	1506	1492 (Collector)
Thomas Mossell	1506	1501 (one of the 'mayor's council')
Julian Nethermyll	1502	1512 (Warden)
Henry Perkyns	1515	1491 (Collector)
John Payne	1506	1491 (Collector)
Richard Rice	1504	1508 (Chamberlain)
Henry Rogers	1504	1503 (Warden)
William Rogers	1505	1526 (Leet Juror)
William Rose	1503	1474 (Collector)
William Rowley	1499	1470 (Collector)
William Ruddyng	1507	1525 (Leet Juror)
William Shore	1499	1472 (Warden)
William Shughbrough	1503	1514 (Warden)
Robert Smyth	1505	1479 (Warden)
Thomas Smyth	1505	1505 (Warden)
William Smyth	1505	1519 (Warden)
John Sparow	1507	1495 (Collector)
Thomas Sponne	1507	1519 (Leet Juror)
Henry Wall	1506	1508 (Warden)
Thomas Warde	1515	1492 (Chamberlain)
Thomas Warings	1506	1510 (Sheriff)
Robert Welsh	1504	1518 (Chamberlain)
Richard Westley	1506	1515 (Chamberlain)
Hugh White	1506	1513 (Warden)
William White	1499	1525 (Leet Juror)
William Wigson	1505	1496 (Leet Juror)
John Woode	1506	1492 (Collector)

the Holy Cross.⁶⁶ They were joined later by their fellow civic officials Thomas Banwell and Henry Wall.⁶⁷ All had joined the Palmers previously – Nethermyll in 1502/3, Kemsey and Banwell in 1505/6 and Wall in 1506/7.⁶⁸ It is clear from these examples that the proximity of these men in their professional and social lives influenced their decision to join not one but *two* external guilds. If anything, this fact simply underscores that membership to prestigious national or regional guilds was part of a common culture among the civic elite of some of late medieval England's urban centres.

What is particularly striking about this extramural guild membership is that Coventry was undergoing an economic crisis in the early sixteenth century; although there were interludes of prosperity over the second half of the fifteenth century, 1500 to 1518 was generally a period of increasing decline, with an acute deterioration from 1518 to 1525.⁶⁹ Financially, the city was labouring to maintain the commercial success of previous centuries. The struggling cloth trade, exacerbated by a national trade depression more generally, and high food prices were significant contributors to the trouble the once-flourishing city found itself in.⁷⁰ But in the midst of the citywide slump and a downturn in wealth on an individual basis, some of Coventry's inhabitants continued to pay their membership fees to the Palmers. While there was a small drop in paying members overall (likely due to changing financial circumstances, fluctuating interest in the guild and, of course, death), it remains that even when the city was at its lowest point in the 1520s, the contingent of Palmers from Coventry continued to pay their membership dues. Henry Wall, a capper, diligently contributed every year from his initial sign-up in 1505 until 1521, when he completed the full fee for himself and his wife.⁷¹ Even drapers, despite particularly acute difficulties within their trade, remained financially dedicated to the Palmers.⁷² Thomas Banwell and Maurice Giwart, both drapers, paid annually throughout the 1520s.⁷³ By observing the Coventry Palmers as a whole throughout the crisis period in the 1510s and 1520s, it is possible to suggest who prioritised membership payments, or at least who could still afford to do so. The civic elite overwhelmingly demonstrated a higher trend of continued payments when compared to Coventry members more generally: seventy-one per cent of the elite continued paying in the 1510s and/or 1520s while only eleven per cent of the remaining Coventry Palmers did so.⁷⁴ This significant drop in payments among the latter group can be accounted for by the fact that the guild did not penalise breaks in or even the ceasing of payments, instead allowing the freedom to resume at the inclination of the individual. Naturally, the former group consisted of those men who were wealthy enough to have the financial freedom to spend their money on membership. Yet they, too, were struggling; as demonstrated by the fact there was a shortage of merchants, a traditionally dominant group

among the elite, to take civic offices.⁷⁵ Offices were refused by individuals based on financial circumstances, like Roger a Lee, who rejected the chamberlainship in 1508.⁷⁶ It is of significance, then, that the civic elite were continuing to invest in the Palmers' Guild with no pressure from Ludlow to do so.⁷⁷ The Palmers were evidently a priority, even in times of economic uncertainty.

Civic Catholicism in provincial towns

Membership of the Ludlow guild performed a service for the civic elite in Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol, Shrewsbury and Coventry, which, while taking slightly different iterations and possessing different meanings for each location, retained some fundamental implications in all areas. One area that has not yet been discussed, but was evidently of prime importance, was the role membership of religious guilds played in expressions of civic religiosity more generally. Such institutional and co-ordinated expressions of piety in late medieval towns have been highlighted by Clive Burgess.⁷⁸ For example, the mayors and their fellow civic officers were in tune with the rhythms of the devotional year in Bristol, consistently engaging in the supervision and maintenance of perpetual chantries within the town walls. According to Burgess, the importance of the mayor's actions in this regard was such that it contributed to the spiritual cohesion of the town. The mayor and 'his brethren' were a regular presence in every parish, attending services for patronal feast days, the obits of their predecessors, and more general celebrations, thereby demonstrating the extent to which the civic elite, as an institution, was involved with the religious side of urban life. One particular effect of the attendance of the elite at parochial events was the demonstration of 'their respect for good fellowship' with parishioners more widely – a phenomenon that Burgess identified as being an important aspect of 'civic Catholicism'.⁷⁹ The intermingling of the civic elite and the wider community in an ecclesiastical setting encouraged regular 'contact between different registers among the laity, encouraging camaraderie'.⁸⁰ This could take place, for example, with regards to elite attendance at prominent social events in the parish's annual calendar.

However, the 'respect for good fellowship' shown by the elite was not confined to the parish. Religious fraternities were prominent arenas for the flexing of communal relations – but Bristol did not possess a major fraternity like its urban counterparts of York, Coventry or Norwich. Instead, smaller, more intimate, guilds were a significant part of the religious fabric of Bristol, with Burgess raising the possibility of a close association

between the civic elite and the Assumption fraternity based on Bristol Bridge.⁸¹ With this in mind, membership of the Palmers, who were intensely inter-parochial, with members from across every parish in Bristol (and indeed other cities), offered a different avenue for the manifestation of civic Catholicism in an urban setting. The Palmers were not just an elite phenomenon in Bristol; they formed a comparatively 'catholic' group (in the literal sense), encompassing members engaged in multiple occupations and holding different social statuses.

Membership of the Palmers may have served another purpose for the urban elite across late medieval cities. It was part of a larger movement to reinforce elite claims to authority. Civic government was increasingly controlled by a group of elite members, part of the 'close corporation', the rise of which historians debate in relation to both the medieval and early modern period.⁸² Yet, as Christian Liddy argued, the long-term success of the urban oligarchy did not equate to stability and the idea of the close corporation has therefore been thrown into question.⁸³ In Coventry, the contesting of decisions made by urban officers was a regular occurrence, leaving the urban elite to negotiate economic, social and religious tensions as a result. One product of these stumbling blocks was the strengthening of relations between ecclesiastical authority and the civic elite in a bid to impose order on the city.⁸⁴ The close relationship between lay religious fraternities in Coventry – primarily the Holy Trinity Guild but also the Corpus Christi Guild – speaks to the importance of religion as a reinforcement of the good rule and political right of civic authorities. Overt expressions of this connection, such as the Coventry Holy Trinity tapestry, as discussed by Liddy, possessed benefits for both parties involved. The appropriation of religious authority to complement the actions of civic officers was a trait of late medieval English urban centres.⁸⁵

The Palmers were, therefore, another component of the religious repertoire of the elite. Joining the local leading fraternity, and other local fraternities, brought immediate and visible advantages in a social and religious sense. Guilds fashioned a distinct social identity for their brethren, and the regularity of fraternity processions through urban space demonstrated the participation, inclusion (and exclusion) of brethren for all to see.⁸⁶ In a society with a widespread focus on the accumulation of spiritual capital, especially underscored by the public nature of many religious acts, membership of multiple fraternities amounted to a certain declaration of wealth and religious prestige. In Coventry, membership of the Corpus Christi Guild was an expectation incumbent upon young elite citizens, and membership of the Holy Trinity was occupied by those advanced in their civic careers. Membership of *external* guilds went above the established norm: it was an additional sign to the community of individual

wealth, prestige and piety. Layers of additional reinforcement were characteristic of the civic oligarchy and the 'great' fraternities of late medieval England were an outlet for further demonstration of the devout behaviour expected of the elite. The Coventry tapestry offered a view of the elite as 'staunchly orthodox'.⁸⁷ Membership of the Palmers (and other large guilds) offered the opportunity for civic governors to present themselves in a similar manner. The public nature of the steward's annual visits, the establishment of a permanent, local representative of the Ludlow guild in Coventry (the solester) and the usual display of guild livery worked together to advertise those who were members of the guild.⁸⁸ The public nature of guild membership promoted and projected the religious vigour of the civic elite.

Another similarity between guild membership and the Coventry tapestry is worth highlighting: the tapestry overtly advertised the close relationship of the guild and town council to the king and, in turn, heavenly authority.⁸⁹ Membership of the Palmers worked in a similar manner – albeit with a more subtle note. Through the Palmers, a connection to the Crown, especially the regional authority of the prince or princess of Wales, was established beyond the existing structures of royal government (see [Chapter 4](#)).⁹⁰ The Council of the Marches had taken an active interest in Coventry since its establishment under the household of Edward, prince of Wales (oldest son and heir of Edward IV) in Ludlow in the 1470s; Coventry was known as the 'Prince's Chamber' and had a special connection to the Prince of Wales.⁹¹ Communication, often relating to justice, continued to flow from the Prince of Wales and his council to the city under both Arthur and Henry Tudor's tenures as Prince of Wales.⁹² Urban midland centres were dedicated to maintaining a cordial relationship with the royal authority in the Welsh Marches, as evidenced by Stratford's policy towards the Council in the late fifteenth century. Stratford's guild was, in essence, a surrogate government for a town that did not possess the right to self-government and therefore its actions were representative of the town 'government' in so far as there was one.⁹³ After the fall of Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, and the subsequent transfer of his lands into royal hands in 1478/9, there was a move from Stratford's government to ingratiate themselves with those around Edward IV's son, namely the Council of the Marches. That year, the Stratford guild sent a representative to Shrewsbury to gift membership upon the prince and the leading figures on the council: Lord Rivers, uncle to the prince of Wales, and John Alcock, Bishop of Worcester.⁹⁴ The power, and importance, of the Council of the Marches in the fifteenth century was therefore clearly recognised by the ruling elite of Stratford. Membership of a guild offered a distinct opportunity to cement political

relations with regional governing structures. The Palmers, with the councillors and princes numbering among their brethren, offered the same opportunity to all the towns from which the guild drew its membership, and perhaps especially to those in which the guild played an important role in civic life. Like the Coventry tapestry, therefore, membership was also a public declaration of a relationship with the royal family.⁹⁵

Reading and London

So far these case studies have been focussed on regions in which membership of the Palmers was numerically strong, but they also had brethren further afield and it pays to briefly consider their experience with urban government. In the early sixteenth century, over a hundred inhabitants of Reading (Berkshire) joined the Palmers. Unlike the other urban centres discussed, however, the governance of the town was not solely in the hands of its civic elite. The political elite (in the form of the merchant guild) was subordinate to the abbey, who held extensive lordship rights over the town. The merchant guild was important but was integrated *into* governance rather than being the sole custodian of it: responsibility for the town's infrastructure was split between the abbey and guild, while administration of justice remained largely with the abbey.⁹⁶ Then the role of the Palmers' Guild in urban setting governance is therefore harder to decipher. Some of the guild merchant were members: Richard Cleche (Head Burgess), William Melvin (Head Burgess) and John Cox (Secondary Burgess).⁹⁷ With the exception of three men, the remaining nine joined the Palmers after their first appearance in the local guild merchant.⁹⁸ William White I, as one example among many, was active within the guild merchant by 1495 and did not engage in membership of the Palmers until 1503/4.⁹⁹ Others that were active in urban politics before becoming Palmers included Richard Cleche, John Wilcox, Nicholas Hyde, John Cox, William Melvin and William Lendal I. There is no clear pattern of Reading's political elite joining the Palmers at a particular time in their careers, which must have been influenced by the lack of established *cursus honorum* within Reading's own urban governance.¹⁰⁰

The presence of Reading's other governors, the abbey and its brethren in the records of the Ludlow guild is intriguing. Membership of the Palmers among religious houses was common by the turn of the sixteenth century, with almost every order represented from houses across Wales and England (with the exception of the north-east of England). Yet in towns like Abingdon, Bury St Edmunds and Reading, these monks and superiors were

also the urban lords. Hugh Faringdon, abbot, and seven of his brethren from the abbey at Reading joined the Palmers. In doing so, both sides of urban governance were represented within the guild.¹⁰¹

London offers another chance to explore the uses of guild membership in civic governance. It is notable that the London Palmers were not from the very highest echelons of civic elite. There were, of course, a few exceptions, like Thomas Pageter (mayor 1530) or Robert Chertsey (alderman 1545–51). George Monoux, well known for his charitable establishment of a school and almshouses in Walthamstow, had joined the Palmers while involved in Bristol's government in the 1490s, and went on to become mayor of London (1514). In the second tier of civic government, common councillors Simon Rice (1530) and Robert Baxter (1536) had both joined the Palmers decades earlier.¹⁰² Overwhelmingly, however, London Palmers were not aldermen, sheriffs or mayors: those who were are a fraction of the overall London membership, which numbered over 400 new recruits in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.¹⁰³ The membership patterns of the Palmers' Guild in the early sixteenth century does not point to guild membership playing any role in the *cursus honorum*: these Londoners were diverse in occupation, social status and parish.

Fraternities within the City of London already boasted strong and enduring links with the civic elite, or with particular livery companies. Some companies established fraternities to sit alongside their Company, such as the Merchant Taylors' fraternity of St John the Baptist, which admitted individuals from outside the craft, from local London inhabitants to prominent gentry families, nobility and those who ruled – Henry V, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and Henry VII.¹⁰⁴ The Skinners' Company supported a fraternity dedicated to Corpus Christi, which also attracted non-company members, including the nobility (such as Cecily, Duchess of York, Elizabeth Woodville, Margaret of Anjou, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and Anne Neville).¹⁰⁵ The Skinners' liverymen regularly became aldermen and also hosted the mayor and other officials at their annual Corpus Christi feast in the Company's Hall, which provided a consistent opportunity to reinforce links between the fraternity and government of the City.¹⁰⁶ Other companies also turned to fraternities to accrue the social, spiritual and political capital that accompanied membership: the Waxchandlers and Mercers were involved with the Jesus Guild at St Paul's Cathedral, which welcomed civic elite and had associations with the Tudor royal family.¹⁰⁷ In short, when the Palmers' Guild was reaching its height of potential use for urban elites outside of Ludlow in the early sixteenth century, Londoners already had multiple avenues through which they could pursue their combined religious, social and civic-minded inclinations. If membership of the City's government was not a determining factor

in membership, we can nevertheless trace a couple of potential influences: the first is craft association, and the second is the relationship between master and apprentice.

Of London's many livery companies, only the Mercers were prominent among the membership of the Ludlow guild. Between 1505 and 1507, there was a sudden rise in interest in the Palmers' Guild among mercers. Eighteen began their membership payments over the course of these two years, which accounts for just under half of the company's total (thirty-eight) within the Palmers' Guild, and is by far the most chronologically concentrated example of the large-scale enrolment among any London company.¹⁰⁸ The Mercers' Company did not have an especial connection with the Palmers – thirty-eight was a small number of Company members – but the concentrated nature of the membership may indicate a relative swelling of enthusiasm for the guild among certain sectors of the Company. Compared with the other national guilds, a higher number of mercers joined the Palmers in a more concentrated period of time, as well as possessing a sustained relationship over a longer period, so far as the surviving sources show. Only nineteen London mercers joined Holy Trinity, Coventry, in a whole century between 1340 and 1450, while ten joined Holy Cross, Stratford, between 1439 and 1480.¹⁰⁹ This comparison almost certainly places the Palmers' Guild as the pre-eminent national fraternity among London mercers, with just two years yielding a similar uptake of membership compared to over a hundred years for the Coventry guild.

It is worth reflecting then, albeit briefly, on the timing of this rise in guild membership among the Mercers' Company. In 1506/7, John Colet, dean of St Paul's, reformed the Jesus Guild and became its rector.¹¹⁰ With his reforming and 're-energizing' hand, members of the Mercers' Company became visible and active in the governance and activities of the Jesus Guild. In this new phase, one of the first wardens (of which there were two annually elected) was the mercer William Bromwell, with other mercers holding the post throughout the remainder of the guild's existence. Mercers individually contributed a significant number of bequests to the guild, while the Company itself paid £10 annually to remember two of its deceased members – one being John Stile, who was also a member of the Palmers' Guild – which was an association that began immediately after the reformation of the Jesus Guild under Colet.¹¹¹ Colet was connected to the Mercers' Company through his father's previous position as warden and Colet himself would join the Company shortly after the re-foundation of the Jesus Guild.¹¹² The extent of his encouragement of the Mercers' involvement in the Jesus Guild has been debated without resolution, but the influence of his hand in encouraging Mercers should be considered.¹¹³ Regardless of the extent of Colet's personal encouragement of the Mercers'

Company, their involvement in the Jesus Guild in 1506/7 came during and immediately after the enthusiasm for joining the Palmers' Guild. The Mercers were – informally – demonstrating an enthusiasm for joining prestigious, large, fraternities in that first decade of the sixteenth century.

Both masters and apprentices of the Mercers' Company were regular members of the Palmers in the first decade of the sixteenth century. For example, John Stile (noted earlier) began payments for membership in 1501/2; he died in 1505, his will being proved in October of that year.¹¹⁴ Among a multitude of bequests, he left five marks to each of his four apprentices, and, in the records of the Palmers for 1505/6, three of these (Robert Chertsey, John Hardyng and Thomas Crispe) followed the example of their deceased master in enrolling in the guild.¹¹⁵ Chertsey and Crispe both gained freedom of the City in 1506, upon the completion of their apprenticeships – notably both described in the guild documents not as apprentices but as mercers in their own right.¹¹⁶ It might be concluded that, buoyed with a cash legacy and having attained a new stage in their careers, Stile's ex-apprentices sought to entrench their status through the respectable medium of guild membership. But, on the other hand, some apprentices were not so far advanced in their career when they joined the Palmers: Humphrey Packington, apprenticed to the Mercer Thomas Middlemore, began his membership fees in 1503 as a '*serviens* with M[aste]r Medlemor in Ironmonger Lane', and did not gain his freedom until 1516.¹¹⁷ Middlemore himself followed his apprentice's footsteps in 1505, suggesting that in this instance Packington influenced his master.¹¹⁸ Humphrey Packington's brother, Robert, joined the Palmers at the same time as his sibling (no doubt a family affair in part, which frequently accounts for membership more generally) and likewise may have encouraged the enrolment of his master, Simon Rice, in 1505, along with one of Rice's other apprentices, John Brawing.¹¹⁹

Although there are similar patterns of apprentice–master influences in other urban centres, it appears to be the most prevalent in London, with eight clear cases compared to two or three in each of the other towns. The contrast is indicative of the nature of Palmers' Guild membership in London, where guild membership did not play a role in progressing through the chain of civic governance. Other factors can be found to influence membership, primarily through households, given that apprentices often lived with their master, and the actions of members can be seen to directly influence others within the household. In London, the civic elite already had distinct channels of civic Catholicism through three areas: livery companies with their own well-established political, social and religious functions (some had their own religious guild attached to the craft); a surrogate elite fraternity for the mayor and aldermen based around the

chapel in the Guildhall complex; and the prestigious national fraternity of the Jesus Guild, based in St Paul's Cathedral.¹²⁰ The convergence of these three channels of social, religious and political activity left little space for membership of the Palmers' Guild to occupy a particular civic function. Instead it must be inferred that membership among London's artisans and merchants was due to smaller scale, personal concerns.

Conclusion

Both Reading and London appear to fall outside the patterns witnessed in Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol and Coventry: geography, then, dictated the presence of guild membership within the sphere of urban politics. For the towns of Worcester, Gloucester, Coventry, Shrewsbury and Bristol the Palmers undeniably formed an important – albeit varying – part of the experience of the civic elite. While precise manifestations and patterns of membership differed, the guild nevertheless was pervasive enough that it provided a common bond among the men who worked together in governing their towns. For those in the early stages of their careers, the guild's system of payment by instalments provided the means to join a fraternity that potentially offered a whole range of connections and networks; it could be argued, moreover, that as this resulted in a disproportionate number of young men joining the guild, means that membership was both long-lasting (in many cases, more so than local prestigious guilds which encouraged senior membership) and ingrained. Town governments were also likely to have encouraged membership of the guild among their number because it provided them with several important benefits. Association with religious institutions was a visible manifestation of the religious aspects of good governance, demonstrating the piety and reputation of a town's governing class. The Palmers' particularly, however, also presented the opportunity to foster further links with those of lower status in the urban hierarchy, who joined the guild in force in all five locations, and thus became an integral element of 'civic Catholicism'. Finally, it was undoubtedly the unique position of the Palmers in Ludlow, and the close links with the Council of the Marches and the households of successive Princes of Wales, that encouraged membership as a means of gaining yet another route of access to royal power and, potentially, patronage. The guild was a source of networks and patronage, especially within the regional circumstances of the Welsh Marches and Midlands, wherein the urban centres under consideration lay. The circumstances of their location were informed by the historical tensions created by the Anglo-Welsh border. As such, the

Council of the Marches and any Princes or Princesses of Wales, acting as proxy for the King were the arbiters of justice and the source of patronage for the region, and this might be posited as one of the influences on the decision of the urban elites in joining the guild.

While the association between civic governments and local guilds has frequently (and rightly) been emphasised, the evidence from the Palmers' Guild reveals a further, important, dimension to urban life. The occurrence of men across urban centres consistently enrolling in a national guild at early stages in their civic political careers reveals an underappreciated element of medieval politics. Across towns and cities, for those wishing to engage in governance, membership of a national guild presented an opportunity that was partially, but not wholly, voluntary – for the fact that the Palmers rarely occupied the same mandatory role in local *cursum honorum* as other town guilds (such as the Corpus Christi and Holy Trinity guilds in Coventry) meant that membership was never wholesale among a town's government. This in itself suggests that those who did join were taking advantage of an opportunity as a means of furthering their connections within the town above and beyond what was necessary, although it may well have been encouraged or even expected for the most ambitious.

The urban elite were not the only members of the Palmers' Guild in their respective locations. The nature of the Palmers, such as it was with thousands of members, meant that the guild provided a place to reinforce and strengthen existing social and political relationships among the urban elite, as well as with those whom the elite bore responsibility for governing. The framework of lay religion – by which guilds were arguably the most prolific element – presented civic officials with the chance to associate themselves with heavenly authority, their governing councils, and their individual and collective actions within the urban environment.

There are, then, a number of ways that guild membership was utilised by the urban population, and the networks created and reinforced by membership were important to the status and functions of both communities. Guilds were, quite naturally, shaped by those within them and so their purposes and composition were manipulated to suit an individual or group's social preoccupations. If anything, the possibility for the guild to possess variations in meaning for different groups simultaneously (as well as overlapping concerns) is a powerful indication of the fluidity of purpose of England's national fraternities. Through an examination of urban elites, it is clear that the Palmers' Guild transcended immediately apparent designations: it defies the traditionally held view that guild membership was frequently inherently localised in focus. Over this, membership had a profound importance in politics: a clear contrast to the view that urban government was insular.

Notes

1. For example, Worcester: Alan Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973). Guilds as a 'surrogate town council' can be seen in Westminster and Stratford: Gervase Rosser, *Medieval Westminster: 1200–1540* (Oxford, 1989), 285–93. In Boston, the guild of Our Lady – a national guild akin to Ludlow – had a corporate organization feel, providing an opportunity for the town's inhabitants with inclinations in that regard: S.H. Rigby, 'Boston and Grimsby in the Middle Ages: An Administrative Contrast', *Journal of Medieval History*, 10 (1984), 61–2.
2. Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 67, no. 1 (January 1992), 91; Dyer, *Worcester*, 190.
3. Dyer, *Worcester*, 190.
4. There were, of course, exceptions to the 'normal' course of the civic elite. For the life cycle of the Coventry elite, see Charles Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), 125–6.
5. Rachael Harkes, 'Joining a Fraternity in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow, c. 1250–1551' (PhD diss., University of Durham, 2021), chapter 1.
6. There are numerous examples, but a few further ones are noted here. In York, the Corpus Christi guild was the unofficial route to power: David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 2000), 181. Even when a city was governed by ecclesiastical authorities, guilds could hold an important role in representing the collective interests of the urban elite, as the guild of Corpus Christi did in Durham: Margaret Harvey, *Lay Religious Life in Late Medieval Durham* (Woodbridge, 2006), 160.
7. For example, Peter Fleming, 'Conflict and Urban Government in Later Medieval England: St Augustine's Abbey and Bristol', *Urban History*, 27, no. 3 (December 2000), 325–43; for an articulate overview of how historians have approached office holding, power, and governance of medieval cities, alongside suggestions for complicating our view of urban elite, see Justin Colson, 'Reassessing Power and Governance in Late Medieval Cities: Institutions and the Cursus Honorum', in *New Approaches to Governance and Rule in Urban Europe Since 1500*, ed. Simon Gunn and Tom Hulme (New York, 2020), 25–44.
8. W.A. Champion, 'Markets and Fairs', draft entry of *Victoria County History of Shropshire*, vol. 6, part 2, (2012), 2–19, http://www.vchshropshire.org/_Shrewsbury_2/3_2_Markets%20and%20Fairs.pdf.
9. Michael Faraday, *Ludlow, 1085–1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), 48, 116–8.
10. Faraday, *Ludlow*, 133.
11. See the section 'Building Solidarity', Chapter 1.
12. W.G.D. Fletcher, 'Municipal Records of Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 21, no. 1 (1898), 149.
13. C.H. Drinkwater, 'Two Shrewsbury Gild Merchant Rolls of the 16th century (1501 to 1510)', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 5, no. 1 (1905), 105.
14. As clearly illustrated in the election records contained within Assembly Book no. 1: SA: 3365/67.
15. Richard Hill, John Forster, Richard Aleyn, Thomas Broughton, Thomas ap Jenkyn, Henry Hopley, Roger Phillips, Walter Wetnell, Hugh Manning, David Baker, John Montgomery, John Barbour, William Hocheke, William Hosier, Richard Phillips and David Ireland. SA: 3365/67, f. 30.

16. Thomas Hosier: 1521, 1525, 1529. William Bayly: 1523, 1527. David Ireland: 1524, 1528. The other Palmer who was bailiff in that period was Richard Brickdale (1530).
17. For examples in 1516 and 1517 see H.W. Adnitt, 'Orders of the Corporation of Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 11, no. 2 (1888), 154.
18. Lister joined the Palmers in 1508/9. He can be found contributing towards his membership in 1512/13: SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 62v.
19. SA: 3365/67, ff. 30r, 30v, 31v. For his removal see the transcription provided in Adnitt, 'Orders of the Corporation of Shrewsbury', 154.
20. This was either through their own membership or the membership of their wives. The patterns of female enrolment should be examined systematically in the future. Select examples used throughout this book demonstrate a pattern of wives joining a few years after their husbands but a complete analysis of all married couples' entrances into the guild might prove to be a fruitful avenue through which to explore gendered experiences of guild membership. All enrolment can be found in SA: LB/5/3/2–10; LB/5/3/40; LB/5/1/2–4. Their involvement in civic government can be found in Assembly Book no 1. SA: 3365/67, ff. 29v–31v.
21. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 13r. In 1512, he was present at the signing of an agreement between the corporation of the city and the abbot and convent of St Peter: SA: 3365/67, f. 70v.
22. Thomas Hosier, William Bayly and Richard Aspley. SA: LB/5/3/2; LB/5/3/5; LB/5/3/6.
23. It has not been possible to identify the year of entry for three men: Walter Wetnell, David Baker and William Hosier.
24. Dyer, *Worcester*, 200.
25. This requirement was reciprocal, as ex-bailiffs would often be appointed masters of the guild. Dyer, *Worcester*, 190.
26. As did Robert Yowle, who served as bailiff on four occasions between 1546 and 1559. Diarmaid MacCulloch and Pat Hughes, 'A Bailiff's List and Chronicle from Worcester', *Antiquaries Journal*, 75 (September 1995), 237.
27. The chronicle is analysed and transcribed in MacCulloch and Hughes, 'A Bailiff's List and Chronicle from Worcester', 235–53.
28. Dyer, *Worcester*, 198.
29. Dyer, *Worcester*, 198–9.
30. Dyer, *Worcester*, 196.
31. Dyer, *Worcester*, 198.
32. MacCulloch and Hughes, 'A Bailiff's List and Chronicle from Worcester', 241–3.
33. Specifically, 3.559 per cent: 11 entries out of 309 recorded Palmers in Worcester.
34. Some new members for 1510 to 1517 can be found in the clerk's receipt book for that period, but it is by no means complete: SA: LB/5/3/40.
35. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 71r.
36. Richard Cam (SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r), John Colman (SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 45r), Richard Biford (SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 70v), Walter Stone (SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 24r), Stefan Collier (SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 71r) and John Williams (SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 69v).
37. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, 119.
38. For example, see the entry of Richard Cam and his wife, who paid off his membership debt between 1503 and 1517. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r.
39. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 71r.

40. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r.
41. Richard Holt, 'Gloucester: An English Provincial Town During the Later Middle Ages' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1987), 204.
42. Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', 204.
43. Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', 195.
44. Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', 195; 'Gloucester: Aldermen, 1483–1835', in *A History of the County of Gloucester*, vol. 4, *The City of Gloucester*, ed. N.M. Herbert (London, 1988), 374–81, *British History Online*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol4/pp374-381>.
45. Specifically, 4.669 per cent: 12 out of 257 entries for Gloucester.
46. John Poole, mayor in 1486, was a Palmer but is not included in this number as he was not sheriff in the three years between the incorporation and his term as mayor: S. Rudder, *The History and Antiquities of Gloucester, Including the Civil and Military Affairs of That Ancient City; with a Particular Account of the Cathedral Church and All Other Public Establishments, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Cirencester, 1781), 141.
47. These men were Thomas Osborn (SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 21r), John Rastell (SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 3), John Semys (SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 20v), Henry Marmion (SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 47r; LB/5/1/4, m. 4), William Michel (SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 40r); Rudder, *The History and Antiquities of Gloucester*, 141–4.
48. Rudder, *The History and Antiquities of Gloucester*, 143; SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 61r.
49. The average number of years between membership and civic office in Gloucester was twelve.
50. There is a brief discussion in Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', 204.
51. Marmion was one of the wealthiest men in England, and Rastell, his brother-in-law, appears to have been considerably wealthy at the time of his death. Their familial relationship (through the marriage of Marmion's sister to Rastell) may have provided additional pressure on Marmion's enrolment to join the guild: he joined two years after Rastell. TNA: PROB/11/29/78 (Marmion); PROB/11/25/100 (Rastell).
52. Holt, 'An English Provincial Town', 194.
53. James Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England: the Bristol elite, Urban Community and the Crown, c. 1471 – c.1553' (PhD diss., University of the West of England, 2006), 34, 219–20.
54. These men held several offices in Bristol, making it unwieldy to list all of their offices here. They can, instead, be found in the following sources: *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith, *Camden Society*, new series, 5 (1872) and Lee, 'Political Communication', appendices.
55. Hugh Elyot, Thomas Pernaunt, Robert Thorne, William Jeffreys, John Harris, Simon Gervys, John Edwards, John Matthews and John Wilkyns: Lee, 'Political Communication', appendices.
56. Robert Ricart, *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*. *Bristol Record Society*, ed. Peter Fleming (Bristol, 2015), 54–5.
57. Lee, 'Political Communication', 231.
58. Lee, 'Political Communication', 232–4.
59. John Drewis, Richard Tonell, John Wilkyns, John Reep and John Edwards. Those who held the office twice were: John Esterfield, John Vaughan and Richard Abingdon. SA: LB/5/3/2–9; Lee, 'Political Communication', appendices.
60. SA: LB/5/1/2; LB/5/1/3.
61. Lee, 'Political Communication', 240.

62. Lee, 'Political Communication', 243.
63. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 17v. (Bagot's chalice in the guild inventory); LB/5/1/4, m. 6 (Bagot's membership); LB/5/3/40 (example of expenditure on victuals for Bristol members). The annual gathering of brethren in Bristol, and elsewhere, is discussed in detail in [Chapter 1](#).
64. Like the case of Bristol, these men held a multiplicity of civic offices, which can be found in Mary Dormer Harris, ed., *The Coventry Leet Book: Or Mayor's Register Containing the Records of the City Court Leet*, 2 vols. (London, 1907).
65. Mairi Macdonald, ed., *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2007), 370; SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 28r.
66. They both held other offices: Kemsey was a member of the jury leet throughout the 1510s. Nethermyll became sheriff, bailiff and mayor. Dormer Harris, *Coventry Leet Book*, i; Macdonald, *Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross*, 393.
67. Macdonald, *Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross*, 414, 422.
68. SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 14v (Nethermyll); LB/5/3/7, f. 28v (Kemsey), f. 30r (Banwell); LB/5/3/2, f. 38r (Wall).
69. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, esp. [chapters 2 and 3](#). This claim is contested by Donald Leech, who argues that the whole city was not in decline but, instead, certain wards and trades demonstrate varying levels of both decay and success: Donald Leech, 'Stability and Change at the End of the Middle Ages: Coventry, 1450–1525', *Midland History*, 34, no. 1 (2009), 1–21.
70. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, 51.
71. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 38r.
72. This financial strain was, in part, caused by changing policies towards country cloth. John Hadden's bequest of £100 for annual cash loans for individual drapers demonstrates the need of the cash-strapped drapers. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, 48, 51; TNA: PROB 11/19/241.
73. SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 30r–v.
74. Thirty-nine out of 55 civic elite and 43 out of 396 for general membership.
75. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, 47.
76. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, 47.
77. As discussed in the Introduction, the Palmers did not inflict an additional charge on members for missed payments.
78. Clive Burgess, "'According to His Wise Discretion': Civic Catholicism in Fifteenth-Century Bristol – and Beyond", *Historical Research*, 92, no. 257 (2019), 479–99.
79. Burgess, 'Civic Catholicism', 485. Further discussion on civic Catholicism can be found in the forthcoming collection of unpublished essays written by the late Professor Burgess.
80. Burgess, 'Civic Catholicism', 485. Shannon McSheffrey has a different view of 'civic Catholicism', mainly how civic elite adopted religious reasoning in order to control behaviour among the population. Shannon McSheffrey, 'Jurors, Respectable Masculinity and Christian Morality: A Comment on Marjorie McIntosh's *Controlling Misbehavior*', *Journal of British Studies*, 37, no. 3 (1998), 276–7.
81. Burgess, 'Civic Catholicism', 488; Clive Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 2018), 104, 256.

82. There is significant variation among historians as to what period witnessed the 'rise of oligarchy'. Dobson and Kowaleski argue for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; McIntosh and Lee for Henry VIII's reign; and Tittler for the late sixteenth century. Barrie Dobson, 'General Survey 1300–1450', in *Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 600–1540*, ed. D.M. Palliser (Cambridge, 2000), 280; Maryanne Kowaleski, 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century', *Mediaeval Studies*, 46 (1984), 355–84; Marjorie McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community: The Royal Manor of Havering, 1200–1500* (Cambridge, 1986), 249; James Lee, 'Urban Policy and Urban Political Culture', *Historical Research*, 82, no. 217 (August 2009), 506; Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c. 1540–1640* (Oxford, 1998), 145–6.
83. Christian D. Liddy, 'Urban Politics and Material Culture at the End of the Middle Ages: The Coventry Tapestry in St Mary's Hall', *Urban History*, 39, no. 2 (May 2012), 203–24.
84. Liddy, 'Urban Politics and Material Culture', 221.
85. For a similar case in Bristol see Clive Burgess, '"A Repertory for Reinforcement": Configuring Catholicism in Fifteenth-Century Bristol', in *Of Mice and Men: Image, Belief and Regulation in Late Medieval England*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge, 2005), 99–122.
86. Ben R. McRee, 'Unity or Division? The Social Meaning of Guild Ceremony in Urban Communities', in *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, ed. B.A. Hanawalt and K.L. Reyerson (Minneapolis, 1994), 190–1.
87. McRee, 'Unity or Division?', 222.
88. For further discussion on this, see [Chapter 1](#).
89. Liddy, 'Urban Politics and Material Culture', 216.
90. The royal aspect of the Palmers' Guild is most clearly illustrated in the enrolment of Princess Katherine of Aragon and Prince Henry, the future Henry VIII. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 34r; LB/5/3/4, f. 31v. See also [Chapter 4](#).
91. Mary Dormer Harris, 'Unpublished Documents Relating to Town Life in Coventry', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1920), 104; Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches', in *Fifteenth-Century England, 1399–1509: Studies in Politics and Society*, ed. S.B. Chrimes, Charles D. Ross and Ralph A. Griffiths (Manchester, 1972), 161.
92. Dormer Harris, 'Town Life in Coventry', 104–5.
93. 'The Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon: Borough', in *A History of the County of Warwick*, vol. 3, *Barlichway Hundred*, ed. Philip Styles (London, 1945), 247–58.
94. Christine Carpenter pointed out that the bishop was regarded as the king's man in this instance, and it was in this capacity that he was receiving membership, not in his role as a bishop. Christine Carpenter, 'Town and Country: The Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-Century Warwickshire', in *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196–1996*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stroud, 1997), 69–70.
95. The close relationship between the Crown, the Council of the Marches, and the Palmers' Guild is explored in detail in [Chapter 4](#).
96. Joe Chick, *Urban Society and Monastic Lordship in Reading, 1350–1600* (Woodbridge, 2022), 44–5.
97. Others include William White I, Nicholas Kent, William Haselwood, John Pownsar, Richard Eve, John Wilcox, Nicholas Hyde, Thomas Nevell, William Jonson, Robert Elwold, John Darline, Simon Lane, William Lendal I, Thomas Dawson I, John Andrew, Richard Birch, Robert Best, Christian Nicholas, William Justice I and David

Williams. My thanks to Joe Chick for sharing the names of burgesses of the merchant guild in advance of the publication of *Urban Society and Monastic Lordship*.

98. The exceptions were William Justice I, Richard Birch and David Williams.

99. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 59r. For his role as an office holder within Reading's guild see Chick, *Urban Society and Monastic Lordship*, 77.

100. The detailed analysis undertaken by Chick demonstrates that there were any number of routes that individuals took to reach high office: Chick, *Urban Society and Monastic Lordship in Reading*, 62.

101. One servant of the abbey also joined. Membership from the abbey can be found in LB/5/3/2–10.

102. For Pageter and Chertsey, see: SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 117v; LB/5/3/7, f. 77v; Rice joined in 1505 and Baxter in 1511: LB/5/3/7, f. 78v; LB/5/3/40, f. 43r. Others include Robert Packington, who became a Palmer in 1503 and a common councillor in 1535: LB/5/3/5, f. 81r. For a list of common councillors in the sixteenth century see David Hickman, 'The Religious Allegiance of London's Ruling Elite, 1520–1603' (PhD diss., University College London, 1995), appendix 1.

103. It is possible that the increasing refusal to hold civic office in the early sixteenth century could factor into this. Simon Rice, a Palmer, was approached to be sheriff in 1526 and refused: Anne F. Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130–1578* (Abingdon, 2005), 477.

104. Matthew Davies, *The History of the Merchant Taylors' Company* (London, 2022), chapter 2.

105. Maggie Bolton, 'City, Cult, and Company: The Skinners' Procession and Corpus Christi Celebrations in Later Medieval London', *London Journal*, 48, no. 3 (November 2023), 216.

106. Bolton, 'City, Cult, and Company', 218, 227.

107. Elizabeth A. New, *Records of the Jesus Guild in St Paul's Cathedral, c. 1450–1550: An Edition of Oxford, Bodleian MS Tanner 221, and Associated Material*, London Record Society, vol. 56 (Woodbridge, 2022), 13–14.

108. SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 77v, 78r; LB/5/1/3, mm. 1–4; LB/5/1/4, m. 1.

109. Sutton, *Mercery of London*, 194.

110. The 1506 ordinances can be found in New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 51–62.

111. For William Brow mell's involvement in the Jesus Guild see New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 275. The annual payment to the Jesus Guild by the Mercers to pray for the souls of Whomas Wyndout and John Stile was initially agreed for a period of 100 years but this was later reduced. New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 65.

112. He joined in 1508/9. New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 14; Jonathan Arnold, *Dean John Colet of St Paul's: Humanism and Reform in Early Tudor England* (London, 2007), 88–90.

113. Sutton stated that Colet may have encouraged mercers to join the Jesus Guild, although she did not agree with New's suggestion of the Mercer's using the guild as their fraternity. Arnold, meanwhile, argues that reforming the Jesus Guild was part of a larger reform programme undertaken by Colet in the sixteenth century. Sutton, *Mercery of London*, 381–3; Elizabeth A. New, 'The Cult of the Holy name of Jesus in late medieval England, with special reference to the fraternity in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, c. 1450–1558' (PhD diss., Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, 1999), 122–3; Arnold, *Dean John Colet*, 89–92.

114. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 32r; TNA: PROB 11/14/715; New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*, 65.

- 115.** Robert Chertsey (also noted above as an alderman) is also spelled 'Chartsey'. SA: LB/5/3/7, ff. 77v, 78r; LB/5/1/3, m. 1.
- 116.** 'Records of London's Livery Companies Online: Apprentices and Freeman, 1400–1900', https://londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEW2293; https://londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCMM1128. The Palmers describe Chertsey as 'serviens' of Stile, even though he was already dead: SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 77v.
- 117.** SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 81r; 'Records of London's Livery Companies Online: Apprentices and Freeman, 1400–1900', https://londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCMM2207.
- 118.** SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 78v.
- 119.** SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 81r; LB/5/3/7, f. 78v; LB/5/1/3, m. 1.
- 120.** New, *Records of the Jesus Guild*.

Chapter 4

Regional governance

At the turn of the sixteenth century, hundreds of men and women from the nobility and gentry joined the Palmers' Guild. An examination of this subsection of membership reveals that a group of factors associated with governing the Welsh Marches (including the English border counties) were the cause of this popularity. By the end of the first decade of the sixteenth century, membership of the Palmers' Guild by the Marches gentry and nobility was self-perpetuating. Familial expectations of membership, the relationship between the guild and regional and local governing structures, and the proximity of ruling the Marches from Ludlow combined to create a unique environment in which membership of the fraternity became popular. Examining the institutions, structures and individuals associated with governance of the March of Wales and the English border counties, this chapter will chart the prevalence of guild membership among those involved in regional governance (MPs, justices and sheriffs), and the importance that it took on. In examining the relationship between the guild and the governance of the March, an opportunity is also provided to significantly expand our knowledge of the Council of the Marches, its relationship with local institutions and its activities in the area during the sixteenth century.

The Council of the Marches (symbiotic with the prince or princess of Wales' household when resident in the Marches) was an integral cog in the governance of late medieval England and Wales in political, judiciary, social and defensive terms. Yet limited records of their activities have survived for the first two decades of the sixteenth century (and those that remain are widely dispersed), resulting in a shadowy impression of the state of the Welsh Marches. This chapter takes the opportunity presented

by the appearance of the Council of the Marches in guild records to ask questions about the impact of the Council on the region under its purview and how it interacted with other institutions. As the association between the Council and the Palmers' Guild grew, the latter became, in effect, an ancillary facet of the governance of the Marches, particularly by offering a 'space' in which political links under the umbrella of royal authority could be created and maintained.

Background

Although gentle and noble members of the guild hailed from across England and Wales, there was a concentration around the Welsh Marches: both the Marcher lordships and the English border counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.¹ Warwickshire was also strongly represented, no doubt due to the holding of land across multiple counties by Marcher lords. The historic governance of the Marches, particularly the predominance of English ruling lords, was a strong influence on membership patterns. The smaller number of gentry and nobility from the western Marcher lordships (especially those in what is now south-west Wales), compared with those residing in the English border counties, suggests that the relationship between the noble and gentry membership was connected to the structures of governing the region set up by English kings: Justices of the Peace (JP), Members of Parliament (MP), sheriffs and the Council of the Marches.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the relationship between urban politics, governance, and fraternities has long captured the attention of historians. Yet the relationship of guilds with rural or, rather, regional (county or otherwise) governance has not been seen as worthy of the same attention.² Most guild studies have concluded that major town guilds usually welcomed the gentry among their brotherhood, but that the majority were local.³ In Warwickshire, the gentry (with three major guilds at Knowle, Coventry and Stratford) focused their membership on the guild most local to them.⁴ Norwich's guild of St George counted local Norfolk gentry among their members.⁵ Gervase Rosser and Christine Carpenter have both suggested, respectively, that the Palmers and Holy Cross guilds actively sought out connections with the gentry and nobility in the fifteenth century.⁶ In the mid-fifteenth century, the officers of the Palmers' Guild regularly invited 'outsiders and gentry' to its dinners, freely giving livery hoods to these prestigious figures or to their retainers.⁷ Donning a livery hood or gown was a visually significant step in the assumption of an 'altered identity' conferred upon an individual with their entrance into a guild.⁸

The significance of the invitation to the guild feast – the usual venue to recruit and/or induct new brethren – along with the gift of livery, suggests that this process equated to membership. Given the importance of fraternity feasts in brokering social relations, the gentry benefitted from attending because the events facilitated economic, social and political relationships, such as marriages and electoral influence.⁹

Pursuing gentry and noble connections may indeed have been a feature of the Palmers' Guild in the fifteenth century, but there was a significant shift in the next century. The guild no longer expended resources on gifting livery to the gentry or nobility – or at the very least, no expenses were recorded in the wardens' and stewards' accounts. Yet the numbers of gentry and nobility rose in the sixteenth century, despite (or because of) this apparent change in tactic. The societal elite had to pay in the same manner as the rest of the brethren, and the riding books duly record that gentry and nobility did pay their own fees, rather than be gifted membership as part of the guild's policy of garnering influence. It therefore appears that gentry and nobility in the sixteenth century saw guild membership as valuable enough to seek out and pay for themselves. Most strikingly, it was not only the local gentry and nobility that joined the Palmers. Gentry came from further afield – even Warwickshire, where the competition for membership was high with three popular fraternities. The concentration of gentry along the Marches and Warwickshire points to a particularly strong regional attachment to the guild.

Council of the Marches

This section will explore the relationship between the Council of the Marches (operating ostensibly under the direction of the king or his heir), the guild and the resulting political landscape of the Marches. The influence of the Prince of Wales and the Council of the Marches was particular to this guild among England's fraternities. The difference, numerically and geographically, between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries speaks to a change in the region that was important to those that governed. A rough sketch of the rising interest in the nobility and gentry interest can be outlined by the fragmentary membership list dating from the reign of Edward IV. The establishment of the Council of the Marches with his eldest son, Edward, generated interest in the guild, but, so far as the records show, only in a handful of gentry and nobility, and those with familial ties to the king, such as John de la Pole, second duke of Suffolk, or those with familial ties to the Marcher region, like John Sutton VI, 1st Baron Dudley.¹⁰ With the re-establishment of the Council in the 1490s (nominally under

Prince Arthur), the frequency with which members of the gentry and nobility joined the Palmers significantly increased.

Upon examination of the guild's membership lists, it is evident that the Council was integrated into the Palmers' Guild. The association between the two permeated the top rank of the Council: while there is no record of Arthur having joined the guild, his younger brother, the next Prince of Wales and future Henry VIII, signed up in 1503.¹¹ As Henry's name was committed immediately after he assumed his late brother's title, it is highly possible that Arthur was a member, although this assumption cannot be corroborated due to the dearth of membership records for the 1490s. A significant number of people associated with members of the Council are present in the records. Bishop William Smyth, president of the Council, was likely a Palmer: twenty-two servants, plus a chaplain and a registrar in his employ, joined between 1497 and 1509. Participation from Smyth's companions and household was prolific during his tenure as president. Smyth's successor as president, Geoffrey Blythe, committed his name to the Palmers, as did some of his servants, further underscoring the formal ties initiated by the Council leaders.¹² The councillors under Arthur and Henry's terms as Prince of Wales were quick to associate with the guild. Sir William Uvedale, comptroller of Arthur's household and a member of the council, joined the guild in 1503/4,¹³ while councillors Henry Vernon, Thomas Poyntz, Henry Marian, Anthony Willoughby, Maurice St John and Ralph Egerton were also members of the Palmers.¹⁴

This trend of overlapping membership between the Council and the guild extended beyond Arthur and Henry's tenures as head of the Council to Princess Mary's residence in the Marches as the titleholder. A letter to the Council from its president in 1526/7 names five men directly, 'with others of the Princess's Council'.¹⁵ All of these men were addressed in relation to their role in governing the Marches for Princess Mary but, crucially, four of these five were Palmers. 'The right worshipful my lord abbot of Reading' was Hugh Faringdon, who joined the guild in 1515/16.¹⁶ Sir John Port, justice of the Council by 1526 at the latest, was a member of the Palmers, along with his wife, Jane Fitzherbert.¹⁷ John Russell, secretary of the Council from 1525, had been a member since his days in employment with Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham.¹⁸ Finally, George Bromley, a lawyer attached to the Council (who has been described as one of the Council's most active members), was also a Palmer.¹⁹ Another member of the council, described as such in other correspondence, was Edward Croft, a fellow Palmer (and indeed, MP, sheriff and vice chamberlain for South Wales).²⁰ Roger Wigston, made councillor in 1533, had become a Palmer in 1509.²¹ Other familiar members of the local gentry who were already Palmers, like John Scudamore, discussed later in the context of MPs, were

put forward as possible options for councillors, and Scudamore was eventually appointed in the 1540s.²²

Guild membership, however, was not restricted to the Council, and the influence of the latter in setting a precedent of membership can be seen among those with whom the Council worked. For example, in 1517/8, a number of knights and esquires were 'appoynted by the kinges most noble grace in the marches to gyff attendaunce . . . as they may make to assist the kinges Commyssyoners at Lodlowe from tyme to tyme'.²³ The 'kinges Commyssyoners' were another name for those who sat on the Council.²⁴ Those named to 'gyff attendaunce' were, for the most part, also Palmers. Out of the seven listed for Herefordshire, four Palmers appear: Sir Richard de la Bere, Edward Croft (at this point not yet a member of the Council), Richard Cornwall and John Gifford. Two-thirds of the Shropshire appointees were either Palmers themselves or had immediate family members who were.²⁵ Only two men were appointed for Worcestershire – John Savage and Thomas Poyntz – and both were also associated with the Palmers.²⁶ Thomas Poyntz was, as discussed earlier, already a member of the Council of the Marches from Arthur's time. Others, like Croft, became councillors during Princess Mary's regime in the Marches. Those dispensing justice in the Marches were predominantly members of the fraternity.

Like the urban elite, the councillors of the Marches and officers of county governance in the 1520s and 1530s had, overwhelmingly, joined the guild ten to twenty years before they took on major offices in governance, which speaks to the social and political space that the guild occupied. A few case studies, drawn from the experiences of the gentry discussed previously, demonstrate the importance of guild membership for men at the early stages of their 'career'. In the Palatinate of Chester, George Bromley acted as deputy justice in 1505 (although he was not formally appointed until 1509).²⁷ A year prior to this, Bromley had become a member of the Palmers along with his wife Elizabeth, making an initial contribution of 3s 4d towards their total 13s 4d admission fee.²⁸ Thirteen years later, Bromley became an active member of the Council of the Marches.²⁹ John Port, a fellow lawyer and councillor during Princess Mary's tenure in the marches, exhibits a similar pattern. His membership of the Palmers in 1503 coincided with his first forays into practising law, before becoming a successful lawyer and king's commissioner, and occupying roles such as attorney general for the Palatinate of Chester, solicitor-general for Henry VIII and assize commissioner.³⁰ Port was appointed to the council in 1525.³¹ Other young gentlemen, like Richard Snede, joined the guild at similar points in their life cycles. Snede became a Palmer in 1505, was active in local matters in Cheshire by 1512, and was appointed deputy justice for the

county Palatinate in 1523.³² His appointment to the Council of the Marches, twenty years after he joined the Palmers, places him as a contemporary of Bromley and Port.³³ Roger Wigston, as mentioned earlier, was appointed to the Council in 1533 but had become a Palmer in the first decade of the sixteenth century, when he was in his late twenties.³⁴ The relatively early incidence of guild membership in the professional life cycle is, therefore, the defining feature of membership of the gentry, and it is one that was also experienced among urban elites, despite the very different structures their roles inhabited.

The Council of the Marches: residency in Ludlow

It is hard to separate guild membership from the Council of the Marches. To do so would, moreover, ignore the relationship between two major institutions in the Welsh Marches. The connection between the Council and the guild began almost immediately as soon as Arthur took up residence in Ludlow and was certainly prevalent during the years for which we have membership lists; but it also continued throughout Princess Mary's patrimony some three decades later. At a basic level, this was the result of proximity: the Council was a consistent presence in the town, holding their court there during term times.³⁵ Yet the presence of the prince or princess of Wales, their household, and the Council of the Marches in Ludlow under the presidencies of Smyth (1501–12) and Blythe (1512–25) is difficult to reconstruct from central administration or legal records. Meanwhile, the guild's integration with the town, through its expansive rental portfolio, the widespread enrolment of Ludlow's inhabitants, its involvement with local governance structures, large guildhall and overt presence in the parish church, made them an unavoidable presence for any visitor to Ludlow.³⁶ The regular attendance of the councillors in Ludlow presumably meant that they were able to enjoy some of the social benefits of membership that were less viable to those who lived some distance away. The councillors, and those appointed to assist them, had regular formal and informal contact with the brethren of the Palmers in Ludlow itself, and are more likely to have attended the guild feasts as the feasts at Michaelmas and All Saints fell within the Hilary and Michaelmas terms during which the Council was at Ludlow.³⁷ The officers of the guild ensured that there were further opportunities to network with the council. In 1518/19 and 1520/1, for example, the warden sought reimbursement from the guild's coffers for hosting dinner for the king's commissioners.³⁸

The presence of the Council of the Marches in Ludlow was instrumental in the proliferation of guild membership among the gentry classes of

the region, physically drawing leading gentry to the town in order to assist justice (such as when the commissioners summoned gentry in 1518/19), but also in a more abstract manner. The Council worked to reinforce the importance of Ludlow as a centre of Marcher justice, and therefore gentry would do well to associate with the town in different guises, such as the guild. The context of the governance of the Marches is important to remember; those who resided in areas under royal lordship (which was the majority of Marcher lordships in the sixteenth century), the Principality of Wales and the English border counties were to seek remedy from the Council.³⁹ In return, the Council assisted judicial bodies operating in Wales and the Marches.⁴⁰ Reducing the need for people to travel to Westminster and present cases in the Star Chamber, the Council heard cases in an itinerant court within the Marches. Over the course of its existence, the Council held sessions at major towns within the Marches. Chief among them were Ludlow, Shrewsbury and Bewdley.⁴¹ The Council also interacted with gentry and nobility in the arbitration of cases involving officers of the Principality of Wales; in 1518/19, Thomas Wolsey, then chancellor, ordered the Council to examine evidence of charges presented against the chamberlain of north Wales, Sir William Griffith, and other officers there.⁴²

The Council's itinerant nature and expansive responsibilities did not negate its integration into urban structures within the Marches: rather the opposite. The Council's presence clearly impacted the local environs, in both material and judicial forms. This was most apparent in the latter half of the sixteenth century, with the maintenance of pews and the construction of funerary monuments for council members in the churches in Bewdley, Shrewsbury and Ludlow.⁴³ In pre-Reformation Ludlow, the Council's presence materialised in a social and judicial manner – and each related to the Palmers' Guild. Ludlow was frequented by the Council in the first few decades of the sixteenth century, and an impression of the Council's presence can be found in the town's court records. Ludlow had been granted the right of self-government in 1461 and the two bailiffs dispensed justice in the town court. Yet the wider regional governance of the Council naturally intersected with the bailiff's operations and chance mentions of the commissioners of the Council survive in the town records. In May 1524, Thomas Ferley was ordered to stay within the bounds of the town, appearing before the bailiffs 'onys a day' until such time that he (and the men standing surety for him) were discharged by the king's commissioners. The following month, William Walker was bound to appear before the king's commissioners when they called him.⁴⁴ Both cases required men to bind themselves to the bailiffs of the town, who acted as conduits for justice dispensed by the Council. These bonds provide crucial evidence for the Council being in Ludlow in the 1510s and 1520s before Mary's household

moved there. In addition, in Ludlow's borough court, several cases survive in which the Council wrote to the bailiffs to order that suits against individuals were dropped, either in their entirety (like that of Laurence Becke c. John Cofe, 1549) or that instead the case was to be heard by the Council (as in Richard Gemyne c. Thomas Bedo, 1550).⁴⁵ Similar cases survive for later in the sixteenth century in Shrewsbury's town court.⁴⁶ Alongside issuing orders to local courts regarding cases, the Council also acted as arbitrators. In Shrewsbury, Charles Booth and William Uvedale (both members of the Council) arbitrated a case between the abbot of Shrewsbury and the town's bailiffs.⁴⁷ The appearance of the council in the urban courts of the Marches were not solely one of interference or support: the Council also used the mechanisms of the local courts for their own purposes. John Veysey, president of the Council, along with Council members Jacob Denton, John Port, John Salter and George Bromley, brought a case against Roger Walcot, rector of Lydham (Shropshire) for a debt of £40 in Ludlow's town court.⁴⁸ In the same year, Veysey once again brought a case (along with other Council members) against a Marcher man, Ieuan ap Jamys of Bleddfa, for a debt of £100.⁴⁹ Examples of such practice can be found throughout the town's court records. The Council, as an institution, acted in the same manner as inhabitants of Ludlow, using the local court to pursue debt cases.

Ludlow's bailiffs were the lynchpin for the legal interaction between the local and regional judicial processes. Of course, the bailiffs were not just bailiffs: the holding of office within Ludlow was linked to holding office within the Palmers' Guild. From 1461 onwards, guild officers almost always occupied roles within the civic hierarchy of Ludlow. The *cursus honorum* of office holding was loosely fixed so that the office of steward of the Palmers and the low bailiff of Ludlow were considered equal in status and were held in no particular order. After holding both of those offices, men proceeded to be the rental collector for the guild, followed by high bailiff of the town, and then finally wardenship of the Palmers. This pattern was followed well enough that eleven out of the thirteen guild wardens in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries served as bailiff.⁵⁰ The bailiffs (who brought men and women forward for justice to the Council as well as acquiescing to the Council's instructions for certain cases) were deeply involved within the guild. So, then, returning to the Ferley and Walker bonds of 1524, the interaction between the Council, the bailiffs and the participants were cast onto a stage alongside the Palmers' Guild. The bailiffs who facilitated the appearance of the defendants Ferley and Walker to the commissioners were Thomas Clonton and Richard Davies, who had both served as stewards of the Palmers between 1517 and 1521. The commissioners were professionally involved with guild officers, whose identities

within local society were multifaceted and public, which is only visible through a granular reading of multiple types of surviving sources. These layers of identity, offices and connections are vital to understanding late medieval society: these men operated within trade, social and religious spheres that existed at the same moments of time.

The integration of the Council and prince(ss)'s household with the guild had a range of expressions. It took the form of more interpersonal relationships, such as Philip Penson paying the guild membership payment of 4s for Reynold Goldman, servant of the king, in 1517/18.⁵¹ Or that of Master Lane, whose debt to the guild was entered into the steward and warden's *memoranda* book that he 'most pay for' Thomas Cardygan, groom of the king's chamber, at a charge of 6s 8d.⁵² It is not stated what the debt is for but, given the total, it was most likely membership. The surviving evidence of interactions between the Council and the prince(ss)'s household and the guild also demonstrate the guild's position as a dominant landowner in the town in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. When Arthur's household moved to Ludlow in 1493, members of his household began renting tenements from the guild.⁵³ Throughout the 1490s, a number of granaries, stables and tenements were rented on an annual basis by the prince, his household or clerks of the 'prince's council'.⁵⁴ By 1501/2, the prince's household was renting nine granaries from the guild.⁵⁵ The Council officers continued to utilise the guild's resources within Ludlow throughout the sixteenth century. Although the castle was the nominal residence of the Council and its members while in session, councillors Ralph Egerton and Edward Croft rented houses in the town from the Palmers throughout the first half of the sixteenth century.⁵⁶ The guild leased stables to the president of the Council in the 1530s and 1540s.⁵⁷ The relationship unsurprisingly appears as one defined by everyday practicalities of two institutions co-existing in a small market town. Members of the Council had recourse to use local courts: Edward Croft brought suits of debt against men of Ludlow.⁵⁸ The princess's servants also appeared in the town's court, particularly during the period in which Mary's full household resided in Ludlow in 1528.⁵⁹

The residence of Arthur and Mary's households in the Marches, particularly the court and the guild, had a noticeable effect on the town of Ludlow. But the disbandment of their respective households also had an impact on the Marches as a region, not just a single town within it. When Arthur's household was dissolved after his death, Bishop William Smyth, president of the Council, requested that two men from Arthur's household, who were 'well servynge jentylmen', be given employment.⁶⁰ Praising the skills of a third ex-servant from the prince's household, Smyth's letter was designed to encourage new and fruitful opportunities for these men.

A precedent was then set for the Council, whether in the form of councillors or the president, to look out for, and deal with the practicalities of, ex-servants. When Princess Mary left Ludlow to return to her father's court in 1528, the president, Bishop John Veysey, wrote in recommendation of certain men in Mary's employment for offices they desired when her Marcher household was dissolved. The quality of work undertaken by men in the Marches, such as Russell, Croft and Port, were lauded by Veysey, serving his purpose to gain favour for the men from Wolsey and the king.⁶¹ Veysey took it upon himself to write recommendations for future 'employment' for those under not only his purview in the Marches, but also the princess': he implored Wolsey to remember 'the princess's household servants and councillors for their preferment' for offices that were vacant. While the close relationship between the Council and the Crown is indicative of the physical presence of Mary in the region and the long-standing relationship between the prince(ss) of Wales' household and Council, the obligation to deal with dissolved members of the household was also a matter of regional governance. A letter from the Council in the same year, written to Wolsey (and the king), requested that monastic houses take in ex-servants. The letter makes clear the concern that the councillors had if these servants were not given means to live, and particularly what might be 'spoken therof in this hard yere if we shuld put theym abrode [i.e. dismissal]'.⁶² The letter further betrays concerns over the 'dearth of graynes' and rising food prices in the Marches, which tie into the councillors' concerns about releasing household servants and officers into the region without gainful employment.⁶³ As the principal governing authority of the region, the impact of food shortages and economic hardship on disorder and crime within towns and counties must have been present in the minds of councillors, especially given the insurrection that arose in Kent due to the grain shortages and high prices in the same year.⁶⁴ The pleading to find employment for these servants was a concern for the Council to maintain order as much as it was in their duty to help administer the princess's estates and household in the March. The existence of several other letters written in the same year, seeking employment for individual men from the princess's household, speaks to the amount of work created for the Council by the disbandment of the princess's household.⁶⁵

The appeal to the religious houses (via Wolsey and the king) by the Council was drawing on an important relationship in the Marches: that of the role of religious houses in helping govern the region. From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, priors and abbots increasingly acted as Justices of the Peace in their localities.⁶⁶ But in the Marches, prelates were deployed to assist in governing the entire region, rather than a single county.

The priory at Worcester provides a clear example. The joint role that the Council and the priory of Worcester occupied in governing the Marches can be explained with reference to a letter sent by John Russell, a Palmer, as the secretary of the Council, to Prior William More in 1530.⁶⁷ It outlined a plan to keep the peace, with the help of both More and the abbot of Evesham. Russell's, and the Council's, trust in More to play his part in the mechanisms of governance was explicit, 'having good trust for my part that we shall do a good deed therein, acceptable before God and to the great quietance of both shires'. The historic state of tension surrounding justice in the Marches necessitated a partnership between the powerful priories and the Council, and it is striking that Palmers frequently recur as participants in this respect.⁶⁸

Further connections between the Council and the priory at Worcester abound: the Council of the Marches sometimes resided at Worcester.⁶⁹ In 1525, the same year that the Princess Mary set up her household in the Marches, Prior More's account recorded that the princess's council (in other words, the Council of the Marches) was at Worcester, noting several payments to the princess's servants as well. The prior paid 12d to one John Parret for torches for the princess's council, implying that the hospitality for the princess and her council was at the expense and responsibility of the prior.⁷⁰ They were likely housed in the priory on this occasion and on future visits. Hospitality for royal households was an accepted aspect of a superior's role in late medieval England, and the attention paid to the princess and her entourage is not surprising.⁷¹ What is noteworthy, however, is the mention of the Council explicitly – it is not simply part of the provisions for Mary and her household. The Council utilised the priory as a base while embarking upon what was presumably judicial business for the city and county. In 1526, the princess was recorded being at Worcester with the prior for multiple weeks.⁷² Unlike the previous year, where the presence of the Council is explicit in the account's description, the arrival of the Council at the priory is indicated through a payment of 'dyvers other pryvate rewards 33s 4d to ye counsell servants & others'.⁷³

The second set of circumstances in which the Council and priory interacted was as part and parcel of the work of the former as a regional judicial and administrative body. As discussed earlier, the Council of the Marches was appointed to assist the prince(ss) of Wales in governing the Marches and the Principality of Wales – a role that involved the administration of justice and the settling of disputes. In reality, it was the councillors who were more often than not the primary arbitrators in the settlement of cases, rather than the prince or princess, and many of these men were, as we have seen, Palmers.⁷⁴ In one such dispute, the prior of Worcester was embroiled in a four-year quarrel with tenants in the lordship of Lyndrige which was

brought before the Council of the Marches.⁷⁵ Encountering the regional judicial system was one aspect of the priory's role as a lord, bringing them into an official arena with the powerful councillors of the region.

One final example serves to further underscore the ways in which the Palmers, the priory and the Council regularly interacted in a variety of capacities. More's journal records payments ('rewards') to individuals who were sent on behalf of the president of the Council. These numbers vary from 4d through to 3s 4d. The first of these payments was given to 'mr John prat of Ludlow coming from my lord president' in 1520.⁷⁶ No other information about the identity of John Prat, nor about what he was providing in his communication from the Council to the prior. Prat does not appear in the extant membership lists for the Palmers, but alternative evidence suggests that he played an important role in the activities of the guild. In the collection of deeds relating to the Palmers' Guild, Prat features as a witness several times alongside other Palmers at the very end of the fifteenth century and in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Prat was active in Ludlow from as early as 1492, when he and John Grenlef were given land by Geoffrey Baugh (a Palmer and guild elder).⁷⁷ The grant was witnessed by Thomas Teron and William Grene (bailiffs of Ludlow), Thomas Coke, Richard Lane and William Cheyne – all of whom were Palmers.⁷⁸ Thomas Teron was steward of the guild between 1485 and 1489, rent collector in 1499–1500 and elder from 1497 onwards. Likewise, William Grene was steward between 1501 and 1503.⁷⁹ One deed in particular illuminates Prat's role within the sphere of the guild. In 1497, Walter Morton, warden, the elders (all named) and brethren were granted land in Ludlow.⁸⁰ John Prat is not listed as an elder. He is, however, one of five witnesses, two being town bailiffs and the other two being members of the guild. In 1500, Prat witnessed a document alongside brethren Thomas Coke and Thomas Clonton, involving the grant of land by another Palmer: John Browne alias Hobold.⁸¹ Prat witnessed another deed the same year with the same Thomas Coke and, again, William Cheyne.⁸² Prat gifted tenelements and land in Ashford Carbonel, Ashford Gameyll, Ashford Jones and Huntington to the Palmers in 1503.⁸³ Two years later, in 1505, he was acting as bailiff for the town of Ludlow.⁸⁴ It is abundantly clear that Prat was a close associate of the Palmers, with both individuals and the guild as a body, and was in all likelihood a member. The relationship between Prat and the guild was fostered through land transactions and the institutional role of the guild as an active landholder in the area. Not only was Prat witnessing deeds involving the most prominent members of the guild, notably alongside other Palmers, he was also renting land from them in Overton as late as 1527.⁸⁵ It might well be argued that it was through Prat's connections to the Palmers – as he was evidently regularly involved in

both guild and town business – that provided him access to the Council, culminating in President Blythe's employment of him as a messenger to Prior More. Although we cannot say much with certainty, his network of connections, via the guild, to political structures that superseded Ludlow demonstrates the intertwined and multifaceted connections between the Council and the priory that were founded on the relationships formed through mutual guild membership. The prevalence of membership of the Palmers, therefore, cannot be separated from these peculiar local circumstances. As has become increasingly clear, the complex web of relationships between individuals and institutions (and between institutions themselves) in the Marches resulted in connections that were strengthened through multiple avenues – the Council, religious houses and the Palmers' Guild being three threads woven together in the fabric of the region.

Nowhere are the connections between these institutions better demonstrated than in the funeral of Prince Arthur in 1502. Having died at Ludlow Castle, Arthur's body lay in repose there for several days before being transported to the parish church of St Laurence, Ludlow. The short procession between the castle and the church has been described as the 'first stage in making the prince's funeral an inclusive public event'.⁸⁶ From there, the body was transported to Worcester Priory, where it was buried in an elaborate ceremony, although his 'heart' (internal organs) was in fact buried in the parish church at Ludlow. The connections between the Council and the priory are therefore immediately apparent in this series of events, but it is striking to note the fact that many of the principal mourners and participants were also Palmers.

A contingent of Palmers associated with Arthur's household were present throughout the whole affair: William Smyth, bishop of Lincoln and president of the Council,⁸⁷ sang vespers and read a lesson at Ludlow and then sang the mass of requiem (the culmination of the whole funeral) at Worcester; the chief mourner was Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, who joined in 1501/2;⁸⁸ and Anthony Willoughby, a friend of Arthur and member of his household, who had joined in 1499/1500, carried the canopy over the hearse at Ludlow.⁸⁹ Richard Lye, abbot of Shrewsbury and a Palmer, sang a mass at the observances in St Laurence's,⁹⁰ and he was assisted in this by the abbot of Bordesley, another Palmer.⁹¹ At Worcester, after two days' travel, Arthur's body was greeted by 'honest men of the cittie', including the abbots of Gloucester, Evesham, Chester, Shrewsbury, Tewkesbury, Hales and Bordesley and the prior of Worcester.⁹² All represented houses whose brethren were members of the Palmers, and the superiors of Shrewsbury, Bordesley and Worcester were Palmers themselves.⁹³ The abbots and priors, along with many monks of the religious houses of the

region, were present at Arthur's funeral.⁹⁴ Finally, the accounts for Arthur's funeral reveal the presence of lesser members of the guild in the recording of gifts of black cloth with which mourning gowns were to be made. Among those named were Humphrey Blackburn, parson of Ludlow who had joined the guild in 1485, and William Cheney, who was a steward of the guild.⁹⁵ Thomas Wriothesley (Garter King of Arms, 1505–34) accounted that at the funeral 'children, prike song and Organs' accompanied the Our Lady mass performed by the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield at the church in Ludlow – the organist was likely the same musician who was regularly employed by the guild between 1492 and 1503.⁹⁶ It seems doubtless that scores of local guild members would have taken part in the prince's obsequies at Ludlow as well. This convergence of institutions – religious houses, the Palmers and the Council of the Marches – points to an underlying relationship that would certainly have been apparent to many of those involved.

County and Marcher Lordship Offices

The Council of the Marches was not the only form of local and regional power exercised by those connected to the guild. Guild members and associates also held other positions of regional importance, such as Justices of the Peace and Members of Parliament. It is not an easy task to examine the relationship between county governance and guild membership in a similar way to that achieved by urban studies. There was no direct shire equivalent to the systems which existed in urban centres, but, nevertheless, several areas of government prove to be useful delineations of study.

Justices of the Peace

Much of the governance of the localities was performed by the gentry in their capacity as officers of the Crown, such as Justices of the Peace and sheriffs. While parliamentary positions were highly important, the other offices of county government had an immediate resonance for the inhabitants of each county. The local elite were the most likely to hold county office and therefore a brief examination of those who were justices, escheators and sheriffs adds a further dimension to our investigation.⁹⁷

In late medieval England, Justices of the Peace held a range of responsibilities, including the maintenance of peace, rectifying and trying occurrences of unlawful assemblies or riots, enquiring into claims of extortion by local officers, and even ensuring that the quality of pewter and

brass was being maintained by appointing searchers. The focus of the justice's jurisdiction over lesser offences (misdemeanours rather than extreme violence) was an evolving process throughout the late Middle Ages.⁹⁸ Their responsibilities required their presence in formal legal structures but also escalating situations as they developed: take, for example, if individuals unlawfully took possession of a property and removed the rightful owners, then justices would be required to assist in removing them.⁹⁹

The justices who comprised the Commissions of the Peace between 1509 and 1514 demonstrate the integration of the governance of the Marches with the guild – a fact that was in no small part a result of the Palmers being based in Ludlow. Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire were home to many Palmers during the early sixteenth century, and the commissions overlap temporally with surviving membership lists, making them an ideal source to utilise. Leicestershire (at twenty per cent), Nottinghamshire (seven per cent), Staffordshire (twenty-four per cent) and Wiltshire (thirteen per cent) had the lowest levels of guild representations on their commissions. The benches of Marcher counties, however, consisted of higher concentration of Palmers. Most comprised roughly a third as Palmers: Herefordshire at thirty-six per cent, Shropshire at thirty-nine, Gloucestershire at thirty-seven and Worcestershire slightly lower at twenty-nine.¹⁰⁰ Warwickshire, while not a border county, was home to a large number of urban and rural elites who were routinely members of the Palmers, and this, too, is reflected in the commissions, of which thirty-one per cent of participants were also Palmers.¹⁰¹ Local customs influenced the make-up of commissions and it was typical that they represented a range of wealth and social status of local men. From the early sixteenth century, they often included local men who were also servants of the Crown.¹⁰² For example, in Herefordshire, the bench included the Palmers Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, bishops William Smyth and Charles Booth (of Lincoln and Hereford respectively) and members of the gentry Edward Croft, John Lingen, George Bromley, Roger Bodnam and John Dansey. Bishop William Smyth, Edward Croft, and George Bromley were all part of the Council of the Marches, while the other gentry were local men.

As the Herefordshire bench makes clear, it was not just the secular elites who participated in this aspect of late medieval governance. Superiors also shared the characteristics of governing the Marches and being a guild member. As mentioned, William More, prior of Worcester (who joined the guild in 1507/8), served on Commissions of the Peace in 1526 and between 1531 and 1533.¹⁰³ In 1526,¹⁰⁴ his fellow justices on a commission for

Worcestershire included Sir John Port,¹⁰⁵ Sir Edward Croft,¹⁰⁶ Sir Gilbert Talbot,¹⁰⁷ Sir John Russell,¹⁰⁸ George Bromley,¹⁰⁹ Roger Wynter,¹¹⁰ and Sir Ralph Egerton¹¹¹ – all of whom were Palmers. In 1531, the same group of men, including More but excluding Egerton, all sat again for Worcestershire.¹¹² Neither was More the only instance of a superior acting as a JP alongside other Palmers; another good example is that of William Compton, the abbot of Pershore and a member of the Palmers from 1503/4 onwards, who sat on three commissions in 1512, 1513 and 1514 (the former two for Worcestershire and the latter for Gloucestershire) with the likes of William Smyth, president of the Council and bishop of Lincoln, Richard Mayhew, bishop of Hereford, Thomas Poyntz, and Richard Pole, among others.¹¹³ On this latter commission, he was also joined by Henry Belley, another fellow Palmer and abbot of Tewkesbury.¹¹⁴

The local gentry represented on the Commissions of the Peace were part of the group that were the traditional occupiers of the shrieval office, and among them, membership of the Ludlow guild was common; for example, John Newport, justice for Shropshire between 1509 and 1514, was also the sheriff of Shropshire in 1501 and 1510.¹¹⁵ Likewise, Edward Croft, Palmer and commissioner for Herefordshire, was a sheriff of Herefordshire for six separate terms between 1505 and 1529.¹¹⁶ Between 1500 and 1530, Herefordshire's shrieval office was frequently held for multiple terms by a small group of men, most of whom were Palmers alongside Croft: John Lingen (four terms), Richard Cornwall (three terms), Richard de la Bere (one term), William Herbert of Troy (one term), John Scudamore (one term), and Richard Mynors (one term) – a total of seventeen of thirty years.¹¹⁷ Shropshire presents a more varied array of sheriffs in the same period, with fewer holders: ten Palmers held the office for a combined total of fourteen years.¹¹⁸ The differences are slight, however, and the overriding outcome was that sheriffs were regularly members of the guild. In Worcestershire, where an appointment ran the duration of the individual's life (rather than the customary year), the post was held by John Savage (1492–1516), whose family had been involved in the Palmers from 1503/4.¹¹⁹

The post of sheriff converged with other county positions, which could be held simultaneously, like Member of Parliament or Justice of the Peace.¹²⁰ For example, knights of the shire were elected at the county court, which was run by the sheriff.¹²¹ The visibility of the sheriff's role, in holding county courts along the tourns, is important in considering the relationship between guild membership and holding a county governance role. Sheriffs, it has recently been argued, held a certain level of prestige within society, and were connected to a significant number of other regional governors: from summoning coroners, constables, bailiffs to court, to calling special commissions to be overseen by fellow landed gentry.¹²² Sheriffs,

along with other governors, were important cogs in the mechanism of late medieval justice and potential access to them (through participation in the same guild) must have been attractive.

MPs and electors

Members of Parliament wielded significant local power, and election as an MP was part of the '*cursus honorum* of shire office'.¹²³ In this sphere, again, the influence of the guild can be detected. Those who were elected, along with those who elected them, are two ways to view the prevalence of membership among those involved in rural governance. The county members of the Commons were often knights and esquires – associates of the lords in both a parliamentary and social sense.¹²⁴ Elections took place in the county court, requiring the 'common assent' of the shire community, which, after 1429, theoretically included all freeholders, from the upper ranks of the gentry to yeomen and husbandmen.¹²⁵ That did not, however, translate into a mass turn-out of the entire eligible population.¹²⁶ The electors, in terms of their status, remained restricted to the wealthiest of the county. The loss of parliamentary returns presents difficulties, however, in constructing a full picture. There are no surviving returns for any of Henry VII's seven parliaments and the names of the members for Henry VIII's parliaments in 1510, 1512 and 1515 for the counties of Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire do not survive.¹²⁷ The returns for the 1523 parliament do not survive for Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire either.¹²⁸ Our opportunity to understand the shape and tenure of guild membership among the elected is, therefore, affected by the surviving source material, with the limited cross-over between the two groups of source material with which we are concerned. The survival of a parliamentary return for Herefordshire in 1523 demonstrates the issues arising from this lack of overlap, but it nevertheless offers an example of what might have been more typical.

The MP for Herefordshire that year was Sir Richard Cornwall (sitting in both 1523 and 1529), who joined the Palmers in 1501.¹²⁹ Born around 1480, he was in his twenties when he joined the Palmers, and it was just over twenty years later that he became an MP. According to Gerald Harriss, most MPs were elected between the age of thirty and forty-five, and, as Cornwall was on the more senior end of the average age of most first-time MPs, his age helps to explain why he alone can be found amongst the Palmers.¹³⁰ Cornwall's enrolment in the guild accords with timelines of the urban elite discussed in the previous chapter and, as will be demonstrated here, the county elite. His fellow MPs of 1529, and MPs from the 1530s and 1540s,

would probably have been too young to join the guild during the years for which we possess membership records. The receipts for membership, which survive in fragmentary form for the 1510s, confirm this with the existence of a note that the MP for Herefordshire in 1532, John Scudamore, had made a payment towards his membership fee.¹³¹ In fact, crucially, the parliamentary returns demonstrate that MPs were frequently the sons of Palmers. Gloucestershire's MP in 1545, Nicholas Arnold, was the son of a Palmer; in Shropshire, Richard Trentham (MP 1536) and Richard Mytton (MP 1539) were sons of Palmers; the same applies for Herefordshire MP George Cornwall (1539), the Worcestershire MP Gilbert Talbot (1542) and the Warwickshire MPs George Throckmorton (1529), John Greville (1539) and Fulk Greville (1545).¹³² Guild membership among the fathers of MPs during the later years of Henry VIII's reign suggests that these MPs, too, would likely have been members, but the fragmentary receipts for membership leave lengthy gaps in our knowledge of membership.

For many, family influenced the decision to join the Palmers: this was explored in detail in [Chapter 2](#), but the prevalence of this particular influence means that a brief discussion here serves to illuminate the relationships between family, gentry membership and the holding of county office. It was characteristic of gentry families along the Marches to have patrilineal membership of the Palmers. Father and son membership often occurred in quick succession, with sons joining within one or two years of their fathers, such as Sir John Wogan and his son, Henry, who joined in 1503/4 and 1505/6 respectively.¹³³ The son of William Uvedale, the active administrator and justice in the Marches, joined in 1503, and the son of Edward Croft (member of the Council of the March, MP, sheriff and JP) joined in 1513.¹³⁴ Especially of interest here, however, are instances where patrilineal enrolment took place many years apart. It was suggested earlier that Richard Mytton, MP for Shropshire in 1539, was likely a Palmer, as his father, William, had previously enrolled with his wife, Cecily, in 1505.¹³⁵ Thirty-two years earlier William's own father was recorded as paying 12d towards his membership.¹³⁶ John Scudamore, MP for Herefordshire in 1529, was a member of the Palmers' Guild from 1509.¹³⁷ His father William contributed 2s 4d towards his own membership fee in 1472/3.¹³⁸ Male membership of the Palmers' Guild was a feature over generations for the county elites of the Marches.¹³⁹ Intergenerational membership of the Palmers sits comfortably alongside wider use of guilds by children, parents, and even grandparents in the case of Richard Hall from Presteigne.¹⁴⁰ Parents enrolled their deceased children and vice versa, highlighting the regularity with which families could utilise a guild to fulfil spiritual obligations, while the living reaped social and political benefits of association.¹⁴¹

While the names of MPs survive for many of Henry VIII's parliaments, our knowledge of the electors is patchy. The loss of parliamentary returns for the first half of the sixteenth century for the counties in question prevents a full examination of Palmers' membership among those electors; rather, the only relevant documents available are the returns from the 1540s. This is by no means ideal, as a thirty-year gap between the guild records and the parliamentary sources naturally narrows the option for comparison: members who joined in the first decade of the century may have died or removed themselves from more active roles by the 1540s. But there still remains some value in a brief examination of the electors, however, as the situation in towns outlined in the previous demonstrates that a handful of Palmers were still occupying official roles in the 1540s.¹⁴² Each return is structured as an indenture, recording the two men elected to parliament and the names of those who elected them.¹⁴³ In Worcestershire's by-election in 1542, four of the twenty-one electors were Palmers – nineteen per cent.¹⁴⁴ In the other counties, there was less representation: for Gloucestershire, one of fifteen was a Palmer in 1545 (six and a half per cent), and for Shropshire in the same year two of thirty-three were Palmers (six per cent).¹⁴⁵ Warwickshire, although not a Marcher county, has strong representation in both general and gentry membership, but that is not reflected in their 1547 election indenture.¹⁴⁶

Much as is the case for MPs, family names reveal the prominent governors of county administration. The Shropshire indentures name men from the Purslow, Hosyer, Kynaston and Spencer families, all of whom had members of the Palmers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹⁴⁷ Likewise, the Cressets from Upton Cresset became Palmers in the early sixteenth century, and the Palmer Richard Cresset's son Robert was a parliamentary elector in the 1540s.¹⁴⁸ Examples from Warwickshire demonstrate that this trend was by no means restricted to the local gentry that one might expect to find in the home county of the Palmers' Guild. The Throckmortons, originally a Worcestershire family who shifted their focus and energy to their Warwickshire estates in the late fifteenth century, were members of the guild.¹⁴⁹ There is again, with George Throckmorton's participation as elector for Warwickshire in 1547, a nod to the continuation of involvement of these gentry families in county affairs; families that were previously Palmers very well may still have been.¹⁵⁰ These sons of Palmers were members of the county elite, participating in the process of electing an MP to represent their interests.¹⁵¹ There is little reason to think that their forefathers held drastically different attitudes in their own involvement with county structures, or to think that the guild's attractiveness to these gentry families plummeted in the 1510s and onwards. The guild's longevity was clearly proven by the sixteenth century, being in its third century

of activity, and the security of a guild, in light of the long-term employment of priests to pray for members' souls, has been proffered as a reason for gentry membership.¹⁵² There was, however, more of a familial expectation that members of the county gentry joined the Palmers, placing weight on the access to regional political powers facilitated through the Palmers' Guild.

Marcher Lordships

The focus in this section has, thus far, been heavily weighted towards the well-established English system of governance in the border region. Yet the Marcher lordships, which were not brought into the English system of hundreds and shires until the Acts of Union in 1536 and 1543, were governed as individual lordships, with officers accounting for the good rule of each. The lordships, along with the English border counties, were under the purview of the Council of the Marches and we saw earlier how they interacted with these regions, reaching their judicial authority to correct injustices and implement peace when needed. But alongside the Council, the officers of each lordship were key in governing the March and their actions are crucial to understand the culture of the region.

The governance of Marcher lordships was firmly in the hands of members of the Palmers' Guild. Take, for example, the lordship of Bromfield and Yale and the case of Lancelot Lowther. Lowther was active there from at least 1497, when he was named as a warden in a valor of the lordship.¹⁵³ He then progressed within the lordship, becoming receiver in 1504 – the same year that he joined the Palmers' Guild – and continued to hold the post multiple times throughout his life, alongside the constableness of Holt Castle.¹⁵⁴ He was certainly present in the regular activities of inhabitants of Wrexham lordship (which formed part of the larger lordship of Bromfield and Yale), holding the lease of the toll, market and fairs there.¹⁵⁵ Lowther, however, was not alone in joining the Palmers: his companions in governance offices, too, joined the guild at Ludlow. Richard Cornwall, sometimes deputy steward of Bromfield and Yale, was a member alongside Lowther.¹⁵⁶ As deputy steward, Cornwall had significant powers of governance, especially as he reported to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who was often distant and preoccupied with his position at Henry's court, leaving Cornwall as the highest authority of judicial and military powers in the lordship.¹⁵⁷ The recorder of Bromfield and Yale, Dafydd ap Rhys, also joined the guild in the early sixteenth century, resulting in all of the major offices of the lordship held by Palmers in the early sixteenth century.¹⁵⁸

In neighbouring Chirk, the same was largely true. William Edwards was deputy receiver of Chirk, constable of Chirk Castle, and keeper of Black Park, and joined the Palmers in 1497/8.¹⁵⁹ Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, lord of Hay, Huntingdon, Kinton, Newport, Caus and Brecon, was a member of the guild, as had been his predecessors.¹⁶⁰ Lordships elsewhere in the March displayed similar patterns: in the south-west, William Vaughan and his wife Margaret joined the Palmers in 1505/6.¹⁶¹ Vaughan farmed Cilgerran before being appointed steward and receiver of the lordship alongside the constableness of the castle, and acting as constable of Cardigan Castle in the first decade of the sixteenth century.¹⁶² Other governors of the south-west had associations with the Palmers: Sir Rhys ap Thomas, the nobleman much lauded by Welsh and Marcher poets, was involved through the enrolment of his son and his steward.¹⁶³

Conclusion

Membership of the Palmers brought access to local power structures. Institutions in the Welsh Marches were highly interconnected, and the presence of the Council of the Marches had a significant impact upon the social, political and religious aspects of the region. The plurality of the roles held by numerous Palmers worked in the favour of each institution to which an individual belonged, be it the Council, regional, local or ecclesiastical governing systems. The nature of late medieval governance demanded collaboration and, at times, integration. The Palmers provided a channel through which the late medieval guild ethos of cooperation and support strengthened the relationships between regional institutions. As the association between guild and Council grew, those wishing to participate in governance of the Marches – be it through sitting on commissions, acting as justices, or participating in shire elections – found in the Palmers a subsidiary ‘space’ in which it was possible to interact with the region’s most influential governors either directly or through mutual associates. Membership of the Ludlow guild was an opportunity to garner, foster and utilise what we might today call ‘soft power’. While it is challenging to identify such power in pre-modern sources, a granular and critical reading of under-explored records demonstrates the convergence of the social and the political in medieval and Tudor politics in the Welsh Marches.

Whereas previous historiography has viewed guilds operating in local political contexts, that is a narrow view, omitting the importance of regional political structures. By looking outside conventional arenas, we have seen how a guild might take on a political aspect in the early Tudor

period. In a time that equally saw more obvious political changes, the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow demonstrates not only the importance of the personal and social connections that guided high politics, but also the ways in which they could be formed, maintained and influenced.

Notes

1. Worcestershire, although not located along the border, was considered a border county and under the purview of the Council of the Marches. Michael A. Jones, 'An Earthly Beast, a Mole and an Enemy to All Godly Learning: The Life and Career of Rowland Lee, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales, c. 1487–1543' (MA thesis, University of Wales, 1997), 114.
2. The exceptions remain in part in the work of Gervase Rosser and Christine Carpenter. Carpenter's focus, however, was on a singular county and Rosser's discussion of gentry membership formed part of a wider argument surrounding the importance of feasting in forming social relationships. Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33, no. 4 (October 1994), 430–46; Gervase Rosser, 'The Town and Guild of Lichfield in the Late Middle Ages', *Staffordshire Archaeological and History Society Transactions*, 27 (1985/6), 41–2; Christine Carpenter, 'Town and Country: The Stratford Guild and Political Networks of Fifteenth-Century Warwickshire', in *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon, 1196–1996*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stroud, 1997), 62–79.
3. Rosemary Horrox argues that most major town guilds counted local gentry and nobles among their members. Rosemary Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century', in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. John A.F. Thomson (Gloucester, 1988), 34–5.
4. With the exception of those linked with the Warwick affinity, who did tend to join the Stratford guild. Carpenter, 'Town and Country', 66, 77.
5. Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 67, no. 1 (January 1992), 79.
6. The Stratford guild gave hoods to members of the gentry, and membership to Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1477, along with Anthony, Lord Rivers and John Alcock, Bishop of Worcester: Carpenter, 'Town and Country', 62–79; Gervase Rosser, 'Solidarités et changement social. Les fraternités urbaines anglaises à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (1993) 48, no. 5, 1139.
7. Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', 442.
8. Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages: Guilds in England, 1250–1550* (Oxford, 2015), 66.
9. Rosser, 'Solidarités', 1138; Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', 442.
10. Dudley's wife's family were Gloucestershire landowners. SA: LB/5/3/1, f. 5r.
11. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 63v.
12. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 79v; LB/5/3/40.
13. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 79v.
14. Names of councillors can be found in Caroline A.J. Skeel, *The Council in the Marches of Wales: A Study in the Local Government During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1904), 34. For their membership see SA: LB/5/3/2, ff. 84r, 148v, 184v; LB/5/3/4, f. 31r.

15. 'Bishop John Vesey to the Marcher Council, 24 March 1526/7', in *Little Malvern Letters I: 1482–1737*, ed. Aileen M. Hodgson and Michael Hodgetts (Woodbridge, 2011), 13–4.
16. His name would be found in SA: LB/5/3/10, except for the loss of almost all of the document. Luckily, a nineteenth-century transcript of the riding book survives. W.C. Sparrow, 'A Register of the Palmers' Gild of Ludlow in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 2 (1884), 85.
17. 'Bishop John Vesey to the Marcher Council, 24 March 1526/7', in *Little Malvern Letters*, 134.
18. Russell was the secretary of Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, until Stafford's execution in 1521. He became secretary of the Council in 1525. *Little Malvern Letters*, 13; SA: LB/5/3/8, f. 6v.
19. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 7r. Skeel ascribes him this title as one of the most active, along with Lord Ferrers, Edward Croft, Ralph Egerton and Richard Sydnour: Skeel, *Council of the Marches*, 58.
20. 'Bishop John Vesey to the Household of Princess Mary Tudor', in *Little Malvern Letters*, 23; SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 29v.
21. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 50v. He joined in Coventry, where he held interests and offices. See also S. Thorpe, 'Roger Wigston', *History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/wigston-roger-148283-1542>.
22. Scudamore's appointment to the council was initially blocked by the president of the Council in 1536. Jones, 'The Life and Career of Rowland Lee', 127.
23. BL: Cotton MS Vitellius C I, f. 6r.
24. The document itself is preserved in a compilation of material specifically relating to the Council but more strikingly, the council call themselves the king's commissioners in three letters to Ludlow's bailiffs preserved in the town's court book. SA: LB/9/1/17; LB/9/1/21.
25. Sir Robert Corbet, Thomas Blounte, Thomas Scriven and Thomas Mytton were enrolled in the guild, while Thomas Cornwall and Thomas Leighton's sons were Palmers. SA: LB/5/3/4, f. 10r; LB/5/3/2, f. 104r; LB/5/3/8, f. 11r; LB/5/3/37 f. 1v; LB/5/3/7, f. 40v; LB/5/3/3, f. 20r.
26. Poytnz's enrolment can be found in SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 184v. Savage was almost certainly a Palmer. Savage's wife and children were all members and, given the propensity of the head of the household to enrol before his wife and household, he probably enrolled in the years leading up to that of his family's – a period for which membership lists do not survive. For his household's enrolment, see SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r; LB/5/3/5, f. 74r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 50v, 51r; LB/5/3/7, f. 68v; LB/5/3/8, f. 11r.
27. Tim Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State, 1480–1560* (Woodbridge, 2000), 147.
28. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 71r.
29. Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State*, 91.
30. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 30v.
31. W.R.B. Robinson, 'Princess Mary's Itinerary in the Marches of Wales 1525–1527: A Provisional Record', *Historical Research*, 71, no. 175 (June 1998), 237.
32. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 26r; Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State*, 147.
33. Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State*, 147.
34. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 50v; <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/wigston-roger-148283-1542>.
35. Ralph Churton, *Lives of William Smyth, Bishop of Lincoln, and Sir Richard Sutton, Founders of Brase Nose College Oxford* (Oxford, 1800), 67.

36. For the guild's property portfolio see Rachael Harkes, 'Building Success: Property Investment and Development in Ludlow', *Fourteenth Century England*, vol. 13 (Woodbridge, 2025), 89–105. For the almost methodological encouragement of guild membership within the town, see an undated clerk's receipt for membership within Ludlow, which has been divided up into streets and wards and details the payments of roughly 480–500 Ludlow-based members (approximately one-third of Ludlow's tax-paying population). Based on the stewards' names identifying when individuals joined, this document appears to have been written in the 1530s. SA: LB/5/3/41.
37. Churton, *Lives of William Smyth*, 67; Madge Moran, *The Guildhall, Ludlow* (Ludlow, 2011), 4.
38. The warden spent £3 6s 8d on two dinners in 1518/19 and then a further 33s 4d in 1520/1. SA: LB/5/3/36, ff. 27r, 30r.
39. It was calculated that Henry VII had fifty marcher lordships in his possession during his reign and a large number of those were transferred to the prince, resulting in a large proportion of individuals who would approach the Council of the Marches for judicial purposes. S.B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London, 1972), 248, 150.
40. For an example of an explicit directive of the Council taking over a case when Princess Mary moves to Ludlow: NLW: MSS 6620D, f. 20.
41. Skeel, *Council of the Marches*, 180. The princess and the council resided at Bewdley in spring 1527, and Rowland Lee, while president of the Council, heard a case there on 13 November 1542. *Little Malvern Letters*, 22–3; Jones, 'Life and Career of Rowland Lee', 116.
42. Steven Gunn, 'The Regime of Charles, Duke of Suffolk', *Welsh History Review*, 12, no. 4 (December 1985), 474. For William Griffith's biography see 'Griffith of Penrhyn, Caernarfonshire', Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig/Dictionary of Welsh Biography: <https://biography.wales/article/s1-GRIF-PEN-1300>.
43. Skeel, *Council of the Marches*, 193–4, 200, 205.
44. SA: LB/5/1/4.
45. Both cases can be found in SA: LB/1/9/23. The letters appear near the record of the case within the so-called 'action book' that recorded the cases presented before the bailiffs. For example, a letter calling for the Blount c. Webbe case to be heard by the Council (instead of the bailiffs) is attached to the page on which the case was recorded in the bailiff's court. SA: LB/9/1/21.
46. W.A. Champion, 'Litigation in the Boroughs: The Shrewsbury Curia Parva, 1480–1730', *Journal of Legal History*, 15, no. 3 (1994), 209–11.
47. SA: 215/37.
48. SA: LB/9/1/10. Roger Walcott was presented to Lydham on 16 February 1524: *Register of Charles Bothe, Bishop of Hereford, 1516–1535*, ed. A.T. Bannister (Hereford, 1921).
49. SA: LB/9/1/10. This case may be connected with another case of debt involving Vesey et al. c. Ieuan ap Jamys et al. in the Court of Common Pleas. TNA: CP 40/1076.
50. See appendices 3 and 5 in Michael Faraday, *Ludlow 1085–1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), 186, 189–92.
51. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 221r; for Penson's involvement with the Palmers see LB/5/2/1343–4, 1462.
52. Master Lane may refer to either Richard Lane, who was likely an elder of the guild; he was certainly representing the brethren in land transactions in the early sixteenth century as found in SA: LB/5/2/1450, or John Lane, who was a guild member and servant of William Smyth. For the debt see SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 2r.

53. For example, SA: LB/5/3/52, m.1
54. SA: LB/5/3/54–8.
55. SA: LB/5/3/59, m. 1.
56. Ralph Egerton rented a house from the guild in 1502–4: SA: LB/5/3/60, m. 2. Edward Croft did the same in 1529/30: LB/5/3/29, f. 5r.
57. SA: LB/5/3/31; LB/5/3/34. Expenses for repairs and maintenance of the stables are also noted in these accounts.
58. SA: LB/9/1/7.
59. SA: LB/9/1/7. In one case, two servants of the princess's household were the defendants in a case raised by Roger Ferne, a member of the Palmers. For Ferne's identification as a guild member see LB/5/2/1431.
60. Westminster Abbey Muniments: 16045.
61. TNA: SP 1/46, f. 78r. For example, Croft desired the position of sheriff-in-fee for Worcestershire. Wolsey, in his capacity as Lord Chancellor, would have been involved in the process of shortlisting shrieval candidates: Jonathan McGovern, *The Tudor Sheriff: A Study in Early Modern Administration* (Oxford, 2022), 64.
62. TNA: SP 1/46, f. 191. A circular letter to the abbots of the Marches was devised and then sent to the king for approval: SP 1/47, ff. 127–8.
63. Grain surveys were taken during the period of 1527–9 due to harvest failures and shortage of grain, which demonstrated that some counties had a surplus while others were in great hardship. The surveys do not survive from the Marcher counties, although Shrewsbury's town records suggest that one did take place. This letter, therefore, suggests that Shropshire (and perhaps Herefordshire, given Ludlow's location close to the county border) were among those counties that found themselves in great need. For discussion on the harvest failure of 1527–8 and Wolsey's response to the acute economic hardship see Buchanan Sharp, *Famine and Scarcity in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: The Regulation of Grain Marketing, 1256–1631* (Oxford, 2016), 154, 159–63.
64. For the Kent insurrection see Sharp, *Famine and Scarcity*, 165. See also the 'insurrection' that took place in Norwich during the same period of grain shortages: Christian D. Liddy, 'The Household, the Citizen and the City: Towards a Social History of Urban Politics in the Late Middle Ages', *Social History*, 49, no. 3 (July 2024), 277–81.
65. For example, *Little Malvern Letters*, 25–6.
66. Martin Heale, *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Oxford, 2016), 211–2.
67. 'John Russell to Prior William More', in *Little Malvern Letters*, 29–31.
68. For an insightful and measured discussion of keeping 'the peace' and justice by the Council of the Marches, see Jones, 'Life and Career of Rowland Lee', [chapter 4](#).
69. John Noake, *The Monastery and Cathedral of Worcester* (London, 1866), 170. The Council also stayed at the abbey in Shrewsbury in 1526 and 1532: Skeel, *Council of the Marches*, 204.
70. Ethel Fegan, ed., *The Journal of Prior William More* (London, 1919), 216.
71. Martin Heale, 'Abbots' Households in Late Medieval England', in *The Elite Household in England, 1100–1500: Proceedings of the 2016 Harlaxton Medieval Symposium* (Donington, 2018), 271–6.
72. Fegan, *Journal of Prior William More*, 228–9.
73. Fegan, *Journal of Prior William More*, 229.

74. Steven Gunn, 'Prince Arthur's Preparation for Kingship', in *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: Life, Death and Commemoration*, ed. Steven Gunn and Linda Monckton (Woodbridge, 2009), 14.
75. The details of the case are sketchy, appearing in two letters written by More to Thomas Cromwell, asking for the latter's favour in moving the Chancellor to examine the depositions which had been taken from witnesses. *L&P*, vol. 6, 335–6; Skeel, *The Council of the Marches*, 58.
76. Fegan, *Journal of Prior William More*, 114.
77. SA: LB/5/2/492. It was possible that there was another Palmer involved. John Lane was another Palmer acting as a witness with Prat in 1492, who then entered the guild in 1503/4. Interestingly, he was a servant of the Bishop of Lincoln, the President of the Council. Lane and Prat's relationship may have been multidimensional – same master, potential guild membership and same town of residence. However, the entry in 1497 may be his father, for he was listed in SA: LB/5/2/249 as being a councillor of the guild (1497).
78. SA: LB/5/2/671.
79. SA: LB/5/3/3–4.
80. SA: LB/5/2/249.
81. SA: LB/5/2/539.
82. SA: LB/5/2/671; Cheyne is identified as an elder of the guild in LB/5/2/249.
83. SA: LB/5/2/1010.
84. SA: LB/5/2/444. Prat also went on to become recorder for Ludlow, as named such in the court records of 1530: LB/9/1/9.
85. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 51r.
86. Much of the detail regarding Arthur's funeral that follows, unless otherwise stated, is informed by Sean Cunningham, *Prince Arthur: The Tudor King Who Never Was* (Stroud, 2016), 178–92; quotation at 187. A near contemporary account also exists in BL: Add MS 45131, ff. 37r–41r.
87. See earlier in this chapter for a discussion on his likely membership.
88. The nature of the Palmers' membership lists means that we do not know at exactly what point in the year Surrey joined the guild – it might be suggested that it was as a result of Ludlow's prominence in the funeral, but equally likely is the prospect that he joined simply because of the trends set by the Council, as discussed in Chapter 2. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 36r.
89. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 148v.
90. Cunningham, *Prince Arthur*, 188; SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 152v.
91. Cunningham, *Prince Arthur*, 188. Cunningham calls him the 'unnamed abbot of Bordesley'. The name given to the abbot in the Palmers' record is that of Richard Barlour, who also joined in 1498/9. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 79v.
92. John Leland, *De rebus Britannicis collectanea*, vol. 5, ed. Thomas Hearn (London, 1770), 378.
93. Richard Lye (Shrewsbury) SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 152v; Richard Barlour (Bordesley) LB/5/3/2, f. 79v; William More (Worcester) LB/5/3/9, 45r.
94. Cunningham, *Prince Arthur*, 189.
95. TNA: LC 2/1, f. 15v.
96. M.J. Angold et al., 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 2, ed. A.T. Gaydon and R.B. Pugh (London, 1973), 134–40. *British History Online*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/salop/vol2/pp134-140>.

97. Christine Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), 345.
98. Lander also suggests that arbitration between disputing parties may have been a task for later medieval justices. J.R. Lander, *English Justices of the Peace 1461–1509* (Gloucester, 1989), 8–9, 168.
99. Lander, *English Justices of the Peace*, 99–100.
100. These calculations were made by comparing the membership lists with the list of commissioners, as reprinted in 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous', in *L&P*, vol. 1, 1533–57.
101. 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous', in *L&P*, vol. 1, 1533–57.
102. Gerald Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360–1461* (Oxford, 2005), 168; Lander, *English Justices of the Peace*, 161, 165.
103. SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 45r. Heale, *Abbots and Priors*, 212; *L&P*, vol. 4, 899; *L&P*, vol. 5, 81, 399, 706.
104. *L&P*, vol. 4, 899.
105. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 30v.
106. SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 29v.
107. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 16r.
108. SA: LB/5/3/8, f. 6v.
109. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 7r.
110. SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 44v.
111. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 84r.
112. *L&P*, vol. 5, 81.
113. SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 52r; 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous', in *L&P*, vol. 1, 1533–57.
114. He joined the Palmers in 1507/8 and was then described as cellarer. SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 47v.
115. 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous', in *L&P*, vol. 1, 1533–57; SA: LB/5/3/6, f. 48r.
116. 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous', in *L&P*, vol. 1, 1533–57; SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 29v.
117. 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous', in *L&P*, vol. 1, 1533–57; SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 29v; LB/5/3/5, f. 7r; LB/5/3/3, f. 20r; LB/5/3/2, f. 172v; LB/5/3/5, f. 53r; LB/5/3/40, f. 17r; LB/5/3/10, f. 37r. It is also worth noting that John Scudamore was married to Richard Mynors' daughter.
118. 'Commissions of the Peace and Miscellaneous', in *L&P*, vol. 1, 1533–57.
119. For his household's enrolment, see SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r; LB/5/3/5, f. 74r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 50v, 51r; LB/5/3/7, f. 68v; LB/5/3/8, f. 11r. For his position as sheriff, see *L&P*, vol. 1, 969 (23). Savage was removed as sheriff-in-fee because he held the tourn in an 'unaccustomed place', instead of the decided place: McGovern, *Tudor Sheriff*, 139.
120. McGovern, *Tudor Sheriff*, 34.
121. McGovern, *Tudor Sheriff*, 134.
122. McGovern, *Tudor Sheriff*, 44.
123. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, 173.
124. Nigel Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981), 122; Simon Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*:

The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire (Oxford, 1991), 75; Eric Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century, c. 1425–1485* (Cambridge, 1992), 112.

125. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, 171.

126. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, 171.

127. References to MPs from other sources have allowed Paul Cavill to identify some MPs for Henry's reign: Paul R. Cavill, *The English Parliaments of Henry VII* (Oxford, 2009); 'Constituencies' *History of Parliament Online*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/research/constituencies>.

128. 'Constituencies' *History of Parliament Online*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/research/constituencies>.

129. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 20r; 'Cornwall, Sir Richard of Berrington, Herefs.', *History of Parliament Online*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509–1558/member/cornwall-sir-richard-1480–1533>.

130. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, 68.

131. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 17r.

132. For guild entries (in corresponding order to names listed) see SA: LB/5/1/4, m. 4; LB/5/3/9, f. 2v; LB/5/3/37, f. 1v; LB/5/3/3, f. 20r; LB/5/3/6, f. 16r; LB/5/1/3, m. 4; LB/5/3/2, f. 140v. For MPs, see *History of Parliament Online*, constituency pages for Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Herefordshire and Warwickshire.

133. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 41v; LB/5/3/7, f. 43r.

134. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 79v; LB/5/3/40, f. 68v.

135. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 11v.

136. Thomas Mytton, esquire, of Shrewsbury: SA: LB/5/3/37, f. 1v.

137. This is a payment from the year 1512, in which the '4 Bragott' beside his entry indicates that he joined in 1509. SA: LB/5/3/40.

138. SA: LB/5/3/37, f. 9r.

139. A very tentative suggestion could be made that a similar situation may have happened in the Corpus Christi guild in Boston but for a singular county, rather than an expansive region such as the Marches, and perhaps for only two generations. The two Hollands that joined in 1513 and 1531 may have been a father-son duo, as well as the Pynchebecks, Reeds and Robertsons, but it is difficult to say with certainty as no location or familial descriptor is provided. BL: Harley MS 4795.

140. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 49r.

141. Rachael Harkes, 'Remembering the Dead: Postmortem Guild Membership in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 63, no. 2 (April 2024), 323–48.

142. For example, in Bristol, William Rowley was a sheriff in 1539/40 and Richard Tonell, John Shipman and John Smyth were still aldermen in the 1540s despite having joined the Palmers in the first decade of the sixteenth century.

143. These returns are preserved in TNA: C 219/18 (for Henry VIII's reign) and C 219/19 (for Edward VI's reign).

144. They were John Russell, Thomas Trigg, Richard Tony and Thomas Rock.

145. TNA: C 219/18C/44; C 219/19/37; C 219/18C/94.

146. C 219/18C/123.

147. C 219/18C/94. For example, William Spencer of Bewdley made a membership payment in 1473 and it is likely his son was the same William Spencer found in the

Shropshire return of 1545. Elector Edward Kynaston was the Palmer Lancelot Kynaston's nephew. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 125r.

148. TNA: C 219/18B/69. Thomas Cresset was engaging in debt litigation in Ludlow's courts in 1530 and 1531. SA: LB/9/1/9 and LB/9/1/10.

149. It was in fact the first Throckmorton, Robert, who was a Palmer. He moved the family interests to the Warwickshire estates rather than the Worcestershire ones: Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499* (Cambridge, 1992), 114. This shift can even be witnessed in the guild records, for he joined in Coughton (Warwickshire) not Fladbury (Worcestershire) or any of his other Worcestershire residences. SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4.

150. George's father, Robert became a member in 1507. George also appeared as an elector for Gloucestershire in 1545. SA: LB/5/1/3, m. 4; TNA: C 219/18C/44.

151. The extent to which these men exercised any political weight, or the frequency of their attendance at county courts, and the subsequent meaning – or, specifically, *lack* of meaning – attributed to attendance at parliamentary elections is not the focus in this study. The appearance of these men is simply used as a means to understand the gentry members of the Palmers and the possibilities that their position in counties afforded them. For discussions of the county court, especially surrounding elections, see Christine Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), 347; Payling, *Political Society*, 159–65.

152. Carpenter offers this suggestion in regard to the lesser gentry only. Carpenter, 'Town and Country', 74.

153. TNA: SC 12/17/90.

154. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 25v.

155. TNA: SC 6/HENVIII/4996; *L&P*, vol. 4, 1526–30: 2599 (5), 5510 (26). The connections of Lowther across the lordship have become apparent through research undertaken for the ERC/UKRI funded project 'Mapping the Medieval March: Wales and England, 1282–1550'. While currently at its early stages, this public dataset will no doubt reveal further evidence of the entrenchment of guild members in multiple lordships.

156. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 20r. He was appointed by Charles Brandon: Gunn, 'Regime of Charles, Duke of Suffolk', 478.

157. Gunn, 'Regime of Charles, Duke of Suffolk', 478.

158. SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 10r. For his position as recorder see: Gunn, 'Regime of Charles, Duke of Suffolk', 479.

159. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 58r; Gunn, 'Regime of Charles, Duke of Suffolk', 480.

160. For Edward Stafford's entry see: LB/5/3/8, f. 6v. His great grandfather, Humphrey, 1st Duke of Buckingham, was also a Palmer: SA: LB/5/3/24, m. 7.

161. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 43r.

162. Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages: The Structure and Personnel of Government, South Wales, 1277–1536* (Cardiff, 2018), 168–9.

163. His steward, Thomas ap Rhys: SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 115v; his son: LB/5/3/2, f. 184v. For a brief biography see: 'Rhys ap Thomas', *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig*/Dictionary of Welsh Biography: <https://biography.wales/article/s-RHYS-APT-1449>.

Chapter 5

Beyond Wales and England

As the previous four chapters have shown, the Palmers' Guild was popular in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Wales and England, with membership assuming multiple purposes in different geographical and social environments. But there was also a contingent of overseas members, which was in part spurred on by the Palmers' activities outside of the British Isles. In the second decade of the sixteenth century, the guild's warden journeyed to Tournai and Rome and deployed the Palmers' existing networks to shape its policy regarding overseas membership. The first section of this final chapter traces the guild's attempts to gain an indulgence in Rome, as well as its association with Henry VIII's 1513 expedition to France and the subsequent occupation of Tournai. The second section investigates those aliens who took the initiative to join the Palmers while visiting or moving to England, but also those whom the guild's officers viewed as 'strangers' when they recruited new members. Across the chapter the extent and character of overseas membership is highlighted while investigating the means by which the Palmers achieved this. The Church (in which guilds sat as one form of lay-initiated piety) transcended geographical boundaries. The Palmers capitalised on this, even at a time when European Catholicism was fracturing, to expand their brethren and secure increased spiritual benefits for them.

Rome and Tournai

In the early days of February 1515, Richard Downe, warden of the Palmers' Guild, departed Ludlow to make his way to London. The council of the guild (the elders and office holders) had sent him off with £3 13s 4d to

undertake 'his besynes' in London, while also giving him additional money for their 'besynes to Rome' to obtain their 'previleige'.¹ His activities in London are unclear, but he evidently remained there for some time: in the ensuing six weeks, William Yenance was sent from Ludlow to London to deliver a further £6 13s 4d to Downe.² Then, in April, Downe sent a priest to Ludlow – one Sir John – to command the guild to send an additional 10s (which was dispatched on 18 April), while also instructing the guild to pay 6s 8d to Sir John.³ Four months later, on 30 August, the guild sent more funds to the warden in London: £120 in cash, along with an additional £10 consisting of gold and silver taken from their treasury.⁴ It appears at this point that the warden must then have departed, either to Rome or Tournai. The surviving records do not provide details of his journey or his activities once he left England, so we do not know the order of his itinerary.

In total, the guild recorded that they paid £310 in 'expenses and charges of our privilege' – a sum that resulted the acquisition of a papal indulgence, securing remission for those who visited the guild chapel in the parish church of St Laurence.⁵ The guild had borrowed part of this sum from a local man by the name of Dyer, which they began to repay in 1516.⁶ The financial repercussions of the warden's journey to Rome were still being resolved several years later when it was recorded that Downe was reimbursed for the money spent, saving £6 13s 5d.⁷ The indulgence that Downe managed to secure from that trip to Rome survives as a printed bill in the form of a confessional letter from Pope Leo X, confirming that visitors to the guild chapel would secure indulgences (offered at Lent for the Stations of Rome) on the feasts of the Annunciation, the Assumption, St John before the Latin Gate, St Katherine and St Edward the Confessor, after they said the required prayers of *Pater Nosters* and *Aves* for the pope, the king and queen (who were already members of the guild), and all fellow brethren of the Palmers.⁸ It was perhaps produced by a London printer such as Richard Pynson, who printed the indulgences for Boston's guild of St Mary and the Austin Friars, and contained a blank space for the guild to write in the name(s) of those who received the indulgence. The sole surviving example duly has the handwritten names of Hugh Leighton of Rodington (Shropshire) and Anna, his wife, who became members in 1515/16.⁹ It is worth noting that the indulgence was not limited to only members but rather to all *visitors* to the guild chapel.¹⁰ The indulgences that the guild had acquired in the previous century restricted their benefit to members, without the need to undertake a journey, and therefore with this particular indulgence the guild was encouraging people to travel to Ludlow. In turn, it would both provide members with the opportunity to interact with the guild's governing council (as only the stewards and solesters consistently met with brethren outside of Ludlow), and present the opportunity

to recruit new members, all of whom would see the magnificent stained-glass window depicting the legendary origin story in the guild chapel. While considerable effort was put in place to support microcosms of the guild across different locations, the guild wished to encourage members to make their own pilgrimage to Ludlow. That is presumably exactly what Hugh and Anna Leighton did, as they had only partially paid their fee when their names were added to the indulgence, and they never ended up completing their membership fee.

The indulgence for visitors to the chapel was at least the third indulgence that the guild had secured since the beginning of the fifteenth century. An indulgence of 1400 granted members plenary remission in the hour of death.¹¹ The conditions of an indulgence of 1497, granted by the bishop of Troyes to the Palmers' Guild, are almost impossible to decipher due to manuscript deterioration: only a remission of forty days is legible, and that it was a donation of charity from the bishop.¹² Given that the indulgence is included alongside the bishop's entry into the guild, it was likely obtained at the same time that he enrolled as a member.

But indulgences from the pope, unlike the one granted by the bishop, were expensive affairs, incurring costs for registration, composition and expedition, on top of advisors' fees and expenses for travel and staying in Rome. Boston's St Mary's Guild spent £3,241 9s 10d on costs pertaining to preparing and obtaining their two indulgences in 1517 and 1518.¹³ The surviving accounts of the Ludlow guild, in their incomplete state, only record an expenditure of £310 – a small fraction in comparison. There may well have been extra costs associated with Ludlow's indulgence: a chance reference to the warden's account roll for his expedition to Rome shows that there was further reckoning beyond the surviving *memoranda* book.¹⁴

The haphazard accounting processes in the guild's *memoranda* book both resolves questions about the practicalities of obtaining their indulgence and raises new ones. For instance, the neat account notes a payment of £130 to one Anthony Vivaldi of Genoa. Although the purpose of Vivaldi's payment is not recorded, and he does not appear in the guild's accounts again, we may nevertheless surmise the circumstance of his work for the guild. Throughout the early sixteenth century, Vivaldi worked as an agent – usually for those based in England or Ireland – to obtain papal bulls. He was prolific in his endeavours, being involved in numerous partnerships and operating during the time the guild was attempting to obtain their indulgence.¹⁵ While officially bound to work exclusively for one company (formed of five Genoese men) between 1511 and 1516, litigation in the Court of Chancery makes it clear that he was simultaneously working with another Genoan, Raphael Maruffo, to obtain bulls, either on the company's behalf or on his own.¹⁶ The guild probably entered into a contract with him

to obtain the indulgence, similar to a contract drawn up between the archbishop of Dublin and Vivaldi (and Maruffo) to obtain a papal bull in 1511.¹⁷ Vivaldi was employed to assist the Palmers' warden, Richard Downe, at least six months after the latter's initial departure from Ludlow.¹⁸ Downe may have engaged Vivaldi in London, his base of operation, or in Rome itself, or, if the warden went to Tournai first, potentially there. Vivaldi, too, was involved in trade, and Tournai as a town newly held by the English, with fresh trade possibilities, may have enticed him, or as part of his route through the Low Countries, where he was engaged with trade.¹⁹

Obtaining an indulgence usually required multiple actors, particularly those who acted as agents at the papal court or as advisors more generally, drawing on previous experience. Guilds in both Boston and York had powerful advocates when obtaining indulgences: Henry VIII and Thomas Wolsey, as archbishop of York, supported York's SS Christopher and Gregory guild for confirmation of their indulgence to Leo X, while Boston's guild of St Mary paid for several advisors.²⁰ Thomas Cromwell was employed by the Boston guild to help obtain their desired indulgence, already demonstrating the legal prowess that would later make him indispensable to the newly minted Cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII.²¹ It seems probable that the Palmers would have relied similarly on help from advocates, the most obvious choice being Silvestro Gigli, bishop of Worcester and resident ambassador in Rome, who either was a guild member by this time, or was shortly to become one, as is discussed further on in this section. Papal and guild records do not contain any evidence of Gigli's involvement, although that does not necessarily preclude his assistance, given the scarcity of surviving evidence for the indulgence within surviving records. Gigli certainly worked to obtain indulgences for other English causes: he secured a papal bull for the repair of Norham Castle after it was destroyed by the Scots.²² Granting a plenary indulgence and the remission of sins to those who visited cathedral churches within a year, the bishop of Durham deployed deputies for each diocese to administer the indulgence, with the proceeds going towards the rebuilding of Norham – the visitation element of this indulgence not dissimilar to the requirement of a physical visit to the Palmers' Guild chapel.²³ Gigli, at the very least, was well aware of the Palmers' agent Vivaldi and his activities in Rome as Vivaldi and his partner, Marruffo, feature in Gigli's correspondence from Rome in 1516.²⁴

With such limited evidence, we can only highlight the arenas in Rome where the guild warden may have been made known to Gigli. The Hospice of St Thomas, more commonly known as the English Hospice or the English College at Rome, was established in the fourteenth century and offered accommodation to Welsh and English visitors to Rome. It was probably

able to accommodate over a hundred overnight visitors at a time.²⁵ Other members of the guild had certainly been recent residents, like Elizabeth Kithin of Oswestry, who had joined the guild in 1503/4, and then visited the English Hospice in August 1505.²⁶ Likewise, fellow men of Ludlow had stayed: the decade before the warden visited, a wounded sailor from Ludlow had remained there for thirty-six days until he was healthy.²⁷ As the hospice was a 'microcosm of their [Welsh and English] world back at home', it offered an opportunity for interaction with other travellers, those seeking indulgences or on pilgrimage, and some other visitors were likely to have been Palmers, given their expansive membership.²⁸ If the Palmers' warden did not stay, he may still have accessed the community through other means, such as by dining at the hospice's hall, which visitors were able to do without being resident.²⁹ In the early sixteenth century, the hospice was under the jurisdiction of the Crown and Gigli was keeping a watchful (if disapproving) eye on their activities, writing to Wolsey to complain that the men at the hospice did little but eat, drink, bicker and cause trouble.³⁰ Gigli's interactions with the hospice also included arranging the burial and funeral of his cousin, Giovanni Gigli (the previous bishop of Worcester), in the hospice's chapel, who is commemorated there with an elaborate tomb.³¹

How long it took to obtain the indulgence, and whether Richard Downe remained in Rome for the full duration or left Anthony Vivaldi to act in his stead, is yet again unclear. Yet a second piece of intriguing evidence remains regarding Downe's journey abroad: at some point, either before or after his visit to Rome, he visited the city of Tournai and recruited several new guild members, including Silvestro Gigli.

In 1513, and in a bid to emulate the martial glories of his predecessors, Henry VIII embarked on an invasion of French territories. The land gained by these efforts was neither extensive nor was it held permanently. Henry's victories were largely confined to the capturing of the cities of Théroutanne and Tournai, a small reward compared to the successes of Edward III and Henry V. In August, Henry defeated Louis XII's army outside Théroutanne, in a clash later ascribed the epithet of 'The Battle of the Spurs', a derogatory reference to the speed in which the French cavalry retreated. While the battle was commemorated in a vivid contemporary painting now normally hung at Hampton Court, the victory had little tactical value and it was the city of Tournai that would focus the attention of Henry's time and money for the foreseeable future.³² The English army progressed inland in September, reaching Tournai and offering the citizens within a chance to swear their allegiance to Henry, an offer which was ultimately refused. Thereafter began a short siege of the city, and the official conditions of surrender were agreed on 23 September.³³ On 25 September, only ten days

after his troops arrived at the walls of Tournai, Henry formally entered the city and held Mass at the cathedral. He and his councillors remained for three weeks, before leaving the city with a garrison of 5,000 men with the unrealised hope that Henry would return to France the following spring with a new army.³⁴ The English held Tournai for only five years, ending with the city's return to the French following the Treaty of London (1518) and the release of its inhabitants from their oath of allegiance to Henry VIII in February 1519.³⁵ Thus concluded Henry's ambitions of gaining French territory, at least until the 1540s.

The English Crown's policy of engaging in warfare affected the lives of all of its subjects – not just those directly involved in combat.³⁶ Disputes between monarchs affected trade, prompted the imposition of burdens of taxation, transformed local economies (especially those towns and villages with a strategic, defensive or industrial role to play) and shaped national identities.³⁷ Despite the brevity of Henry's expedition in the 1510s, its impact on the political and military landscape of early sixteenth century Europe is well illustrated.³⁸ The capture and brief occupation of Tournai had a tangible commercial impact too, with trading rights granted to its inhabitants in a parliamentary act of 1514.³⁹ And Henry's fixation on war is important for its impact on the Ludlow guild and its activities, offering the opportunity to journey to Tournai and to utilise pre-existing networks of membership to recruit new brothers and sisters. This is a previously unrecognised socio-religious side effect of Henry's campaign, and a stark reminder that a close reading of sources that fall under themes of 'religious' or 'local history' have significantly wider application for enhancing our understanding of the Middle Ages. The following examines who paid for membership while in Tournai, how recruitment materialised and how the networks of the Welsh Marches discussed in the previous chapter served the Palmers' Guild in their overseas interactions.

At some point between August 1515 and December 1516, Richard Downe entered Tournai. While there, he recruited at least seven new members and collected fees from two existing members. Among the new recruits were a few notable names, such as Sir Edward Bensted, treasurer of the city and garrison of Tournai, his wife Joyce, and Silvester Gigli, the absentee bishop of Worcester and resident ambassador of Rome, as discussed previously. Others included Thomas White, a messenger 'sumtyme of Ludlow'. The way in which the guild recorded their names reflect the transitory nature of the English in Tournai; or at least, perhaps, the guild's priority to locate individuals in relation to well-trodden recruitment patterns. Despite the list of new recruits comprising those 'names master warden made in turney [Tournai]', individuals were identified by their location within England. Sir Edward Bensted and his wife were to be 'set under the king's ho[us]' in

the guild records, while others were identified by their 'original' location: Quatt, Ludlow, Ashford (all in Shropshire) and London. The clerk's record of their English locations was a practical measure, in order to allow for future stewards to easily locate the men to collect further fees if they returned, but it might also indicate the perceived temporary nature of garrisoning Tournai.

Although surviving records of Tournai enrolment are limited, they tell a story of the Palmers' Guild's own expedition to Europe in the early sixteenth century, while further reinforcing how prominent and widespread the guild's networks were. The recruitment of Silvestro Gigli in Tournai is particularly revealing about networks that were formed in and of the Welsh Marches but materialised abroad. There are two layers to his connections to the Palmers' Guild and Tournai that illustrate reasons why Gigli became a member: the see of Worcester and Thomas Wolsey.

From a family of merchant bankers with origins in Lucca but who were often based in London, Silvestro Gigli was recorded as resident in London during the alien subsidy assessments of 1483 as a servant of his cousin Giovanni Gigli, who was at that time archdeacon of London and papal collector.⁴⁰ He was promoted to the bishopric of Worcester in 1498, upon the death of his cousin Giovanni, who had been the previous incumbent. Gigli held a number of positions that connected him to the royal court throughout his career, most notably as the papal nuncio that brought the dispensation permitting Prince Henry to marry Katherine of Aragon. Gigli remained at the English court as papal nuncio until 1512, while also serving as a royal chaplain. From 1512, he was sent as the king's representative to the Fifth Lateran Council and for the remainder of his life acted as the resident English envoy in Rome.⁴¹

It is through his position as envoy that Gigli was drawn towards Tournai. Gigli spent the best part of the English occupation working tirelessly to gain full control of the bishopric of Tournai for Thomas Wolsey, whose appointment to the see was disputed by the French bishop-elect, Louis Guillard. Both Guillard and Wolsey had appointed vicars general to collect revenues but Richard Sampson, Wolsey's man, was continually thwarted by his French equivalent.⁴² Frustrated, Wolsey requested that Gigli seek further papal support for control of the diocese of Tournai. The fight for the bishopric resulted in a steady stream of correspondence between Gigli, at the papal court, and officials in England. Gigli's diplomatic focus on Tournai, therefore, is not unexpected – but his presence in Tournai is not documented elsewhere in English governmental sources. Gigli's centrality to Tudor diplomatic activity (which is illustrated in a visual manner in the network graphs created by the Tudor Letters Project) means that his whereabouts in the 1510s are relatively well documented

through English governmental records and correspondence – but there is no reference to him at Tournai.⁴³ Tracing his movements through this correspondence (which places him entirely in Italy, at Rome, Viterbo, Portico, Arezzo, Florence and Bologna), there are a few opportunities during which he might have been in Tournai between August 1515 and December 1516 – the period of time in which Downe was away from Ludlow.⁴⁴ Based on his correspondence preserved in the State Papers, which states the location he sent each letter from, there are three periods of time, ranging from four weeks to two months, during which Gigli's whereabouts are not accounted for, which may have given him time to travel from Italy to Tournai.⁴⁵ It is certainly not unreasonable that Gigli may have been in Tournai in 1516, travelling there to attend to the issue of the bishopric.

But we must be wary not to assume that the inclusion of Gigli's name is definite proof of his presence in Tournai. For, when the warden recorded Gigli's entry, he also recorded the name of Gigli's vicar general, John Bell, who may have signed up his master, either on his own initiative or on Gigli's behalf.⁴⁶ Bell was, as the diocese of Worcester's vicar general, Gigli's chief operative when distant from his see. While successive Italians held the bishopric of Worcester from the end of the fifteenth century until the Reformation, proctors general, vicar generals and commissaries took charge of the daily running of the diocese.⁴⁷ These men were regularly members of the Palmers. The first of Gigli's proctors general, John Paul Gigli (a relative of the bishop), joined in 1497.⁴⁸ David Leweys, who had become a Palmer in 1503/4, frequently acted as commissary of the diocese and a judge in the consistory court.⁴⁹ Of the seven vicars general under the Italian bishops, at least three were Palmers: Thomas Wodington, John Bell and Thomas Parker.⁵⁰ A further Palmer, John Mogriche, acted as vicar general while the office holder, Dr Thomas Hannibal, was deployed on diplomatic missions.⁵¹ The absentee nature of the Italian bishops elevated the significance of these officers.

Given the importance of the vicars general in governing the diocese (which was sizeable, crossing several counties near the modern-day border between England and Wales), their involvement in the Palmers is illuminating. As experienced ecclesiastical administrators, they were often either of local origin or had previously established connections with the diocese.⁵² In the case of John Bell, he was born in Worcestershire, acted as a proctor before becoming vicar general, and held benefices in the neighbouring county of Shropshire.⁵³ Thomas Parker likewise came from Worcestershire and held ecclesiastical posts within Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. One of these presentments was the rectory of Buckland (Gloucestershire), which was owned by Gloucester Abbey. Parker was presented this rectory by his brother – and fellow Palmer – prior William

Malvern of Gloucester.⁵⁴ Parker was tied even further into the many strands of the guild's network: he was presented to the vicarage of Wolferlow (Herefordshire), a benefice that was overseen by the prioress and convent of Aconbury (Herefordshire).⁵⁵ Both parties involved in this transaction were Palmers: the prioress and nuns were members of the guild.⁵⁶

There is a final layer of connection between Gigli and the Palmers' Guild. In addition to familial ties to the guild (through his kin John Paul Gigli's entry), and that through his vicars general, he was also associated with the guild through John Wednesbury, then prior of Worcester, who had become a Palmer in 1503/4 while holding the office of sexton of the priory.⁵⁷ Alongside his vicars general, Gigli deployed the services of Wednesbury to manage the diocese between 1507 and 1518.⁵⁸ During Wednesbury's tenure as sexton and then prior, there is a marked increase in guild recruitment from religious houses in the Marches, aided by Wednesbury's regular journeys to religious communities within the diocese, particularly when he was sexton.⁵⁹ The priory at Worcester was, as we have seen in the previous chapter, influential in the governing of the Marches and was strongly tied to the guild at Ludlow. There were, then, a multitude of second-degree connections between the Palmers and Gigli, operating for years before the bishop's own entry into the guild.

For the remaining new members, we may well ask how the guild recruited these new members in a town that the English had only recently conquered? Unlike locations in England and Wales, the usual structures to aid enlistment were not present. Villages, towns and cities in England and Wales were used to the Palmers arriving around the same time each year, as well as the presence of local solesters to help with recruitment. Both of these were obviously lacking in Tournai in 1515/16. Yet when Downe arrived, he entered a city that had been conquered by troops comprised of many Palmers. Several high-ranking Palmers were involved in the Battle of the Spurs and the siege of Tournai, like Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Stanley, Sir Richard Sackville and Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham.⁶⁰ Stafford participated in the celebrations at Tournai as well, acting as a judge at the lavish tournament Henry held at Tournai in celebration of his victory.⁶¹ A number of men who were knighted in Tournai Cathedral following the English victory were also connected with the Palmers, through their own membership and long-standing familial connections, including Christopher Baynham, Edward Belknap and John Savage. Baynham's mother, Alice Denys, had joined the Palmers in 1503/4, along with her deceased relatives, and Baynham and his wife joined a few years later.⁶² Belknap had become a member in 1505/6, while Savage's family and his servants joined throughout the early sixteenth century.⁶³ Welsh captains, like Sir Rhys ap Thomas, had long-standing familial

associations with the guild at Ludlow, and were praised for their efforts on the battlefields of Théroutanne and Tournai by poets.⁶⁴

Those left behind to garrison the city in the ensuing years were also Palmers. In the year before the warden's arrival, the guild recorded the enrolment of John Turnor, yeoman of the guard, and his wife, but noted that Turnor was residing in Tournai.⁶⁵ While the warden was present, he collected fees from an existing member, Robert Leighton, who had begun his membership 'yn prince arthures days'.⁶⁶ Robert Leighton was also a yeoman of the king's guard under both Henry VII and Henry VIII, and was given black livery to wear at the funeral of Henry VII. In Henry's French excursion, Leighton was initially appointed petty captain of the ship *Gabriel of Topsham* and ordered to muster mariners for that ship in 1512, as part of the preparations for Henry's war. Once in Tournai, he remained there until at least 1518 where he can be found protesting the changes in pay for men of the garrison in a letter to Wolsey.⁶⁷

If other Palmers contributed to their membership while in Tournai, the records are lost. Yet names within the military accounts indicate that several men within the city were Palmers, like Richard Whethill, porter of the city.⁶⁸ The Welsh captains of the garrison had, unsurprisingly, many guild members among them. Sir Owen Perrot had joined the guild in 1499/1500; John Wogan, knight, had joined in 1503/4; Richard Wogan and his petty captain, Harry Wogan, had joined in 1507/8 and 1505/6 respectively; and so, too, had captain Dafydd ap Phillip in 1507/8.⁶⁹ It is entirely possible – indeed, probable – that many other captains, both Welsh and English, were Palmers. The nature of surviving expenses relating to the large garrison at Tournai is such that the names of the captains and petty captains recorded rarely have any other identifying descriptors with them (such as location of origin) and therefore it is difficult to say with much certainty if other officers are the same ones noted in the Palmers' records. Two examples from among hundreds illustrate the point clearly. John Cotton, petty captain, was at Tournai and collected payment for his captain's retinue. There are two John Cottons in the Palmers' Guild records – he could be either of them, or someone else entirely. Was he the John Cotton who joined the guild in 1502 while a member of Prince Arthur's household?⁷⁰ Or was he the John Cotton of Shropshire that had joined in 1505?⁷¹ Was his fellow officer, captain John Hussy, one of the two men with the same name who had joined from Shrewsbury and Herefordshire in the previous decade?⁷²

Identifying members of retinues and connecting them to the guild is equally challenging. Payments to soldiers were routinely handled by the captain and petty captain of retinues and thus the accounts of the treasurer often privilege the names of captains and petty captains, noting only the

size of their retinues among which the money was to be distributed.⁷³ Where the occasional list has survived, we are met once again with the perennial issue that there is no guarantee that the individuals with corresponding names in the guild records are indeed the same individual. The reality of the geographic spread of the Palmers, with its extensive enrolment of those in the lower socio-economic brackets, means that it is highly probable that many of the retinue of these captains – especially those led by the Welsh gentry – were members of the guild. With over 28,000 men as part of Henry's expedition to France, most people in England and Wales probably knew someone who served.⁷⁴ The same rationale might be applied to guild membership: the sheer number of Palmers in early sixteenth century England meant that it is probable that a number of Palmers served. Other surviving accounts, such as the large number that relate to the expensive building of the citadel in Tournai, rarely present any names that allow us to connect individuals to the city at particular moments in time.⁷⁵

With or without exact numbers of Palmers within the garrison of Tournai, when Richard Downe arrived, a number of connections could be deployed. When individuals joined a guild, they became part of a community that promised mutual aid and protection.⁷⁶ Our knowledge of forms of guild support usually come from ordinances, which place the emphasis on providing financial aid for members in poverty, or on the costs and spiritual aid associated with death.⁷⁷ Beyond these commonly expressed benefits, Gervase Rosser has demonstrated that guild networks were also helpful in securing employment.⁷⁸ Guild members, as it has been shown throughout this book, also provided for the guild, as an entity, by encouraging recruitment among their own local and family networks.⁷⁹ It is reasonable to assume that the existing guild members present in the city provided Downe with introductions to Bensted and Gigli (and the other new recruits), thereby playing a part in expanding guild membership. There were ample opportunities for the Palmers' Guild to utilise networks in Tournai.

It was not only the living at Tournai who ended up part of the Palmers' Guild. Richard Meyos, a yeoman of the guard, was entered in the guild in 1516/17, as 'deceased in Tournai with the kinges grace'. Described as the son of Thomas Meyos of Richards Castle and given that the discounted rate of 2s 6d for deceased members in the surrounding area of Ludlow, Richard's enrolment was probably undertaken by his father.⁸⁰ In the same vein, it is worth also mentioning who was *not* among those recorded as being recruited by Downe in Tournai, with the caveat that only a single folio of names survives (which appears to be a later copy written by the clerk in Ludlow) and so therefore we do not know whether a more significant

recruitment took place. Permanent inhabitants of Tournai are absent in Downe's recruitment, which is perhaps unsurprising: the mercantile elite who did not support the English occupation, for the most part, relocated to other regions of the Low Countries, or France, and some of the remaining inhabitants of Tournai plotted against the English.⁸¹ The guild, despite its established history of including members from Ireland, Gascony and Iberia (discussed in the next section), may well have been viewed as thoroughly 'English' or 'Welsh' – underlined, undoubtedly, through the membership of the occupying militia stationed within the city, in addition to their conqueror, Henry VIII, and his queen, Katharine of Aragon, the English nobility, and the Welsh gentry.⁸²

'Foreign' Membership

The men and women who hailed from Tournai may not have joined the Ludlow guild but those from other territories did. Eight 'foreigners' or 'aliens' (six men, two women), originating from modern-day France, Iberia and Ireland, joined the Palmers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These were few, but their presence in the guild is worth a brief discussion as it usefully illuminates the reach of the guild, adding another dimension to its already varied membership. Mercantile trade and historic ties with other polities are perhaps two of the influences upon such membership. The aliens within the Palmers are reflective of wider membership of the guild, although that is perhaps unsurprising given that the Palmers community, as has been seen, consisted of individuals from a range of socio-economic circumstances. The inclusivity of the Palmers, along with their mobile presence in late medieval society, may explain why they appear to be unusual in their foreign membership among the large guilds of late medieval England. On the whole, alien membership is rarely discussed in studies on guilds, featuring instead in scholarship on marginality or alien experiences in urban centres.⁸³

The enrolment of non-Welsh or non-English membership mirrored wider trading networks. There were a couple of men from Gascony who joined the guild in the 1460s and early sixteenth century. Bernard 'of St Mark of Bordeaux' was described as dwelling in London when he became a Palmer.⁸⁴ In Bristol, a merchant of Bordeaux contributed towards his membership fee in 1506 with wine, presumably from Gascony and related to his trade.⁸⁵ Bristol and Bordeaux had a long-standing trade relationship and it is perhaps surprising that merchants from Gascony are not better represented among the guild, given the strength of the Bristol mercantile contingent within the Palmers.⁸⁶ While the wine trade with Bordeaux did

drop with England's loss of Gascony in 1453, trading of wine was still a feature of Bristol's sixteenth-century mercantile activity.⁸⁷ The lack of Gascon representation, however, may be related to the uneven survival of membership records or the occasional desire of Bristolian merchants to keep overseas commerce 'in their own hands', rather than those of aliens.⁸⁸

Commercial networks also influenced the Irish connections present in the Palmers' Guild. John Welshe of Trim (Co. Meath) but 'sometimes citizen of Coventry' joined in 1505, contributing money towards his membership fee in that year and the one following.⁸⁹ In the later Middle Ages, fuelled by a demand for wool and linen, Ireland's exports were channelled through north-west England before making their way down to the Midlands, particularly Coventry.⁹⁰ While a destination in and of itself, Coventry was simultaneously a node in the network of trade between Ireland and London, with merchants (or their agents) travelling from Ireland to Chester and then Coventry before making their way to the English capital.⁹¹ Irish merchants are known to have become freemen of Chester to help establish their credentials to trade elsewhere in England and Welshe may have done the same thing, but in Coventry – hence the guild describing him as this 'sometimes citizen of Coventry'.⁹² Over and above that, Welshe may have been reminded of devotional connections to the parish of Trim's popular altar of St Laurence, as the Palmers were based in a church of the same dedication.⁹³ Trim was part of the Pale, being one of the four Anglicised eastern Irish counties, where membership of fraternities was popular and displayed similar characteristics to western European fraternities. Northern and western Irish inhabitants, on the other hand, channelled lay devotion through houses of religious orders.⁹⁴ In joining the Palmers' Guild, Welshe was acting as he might have in his local community, while accessing the potential benefits of an extensive network of Palmers in his new (or temporary) home.

Other Palmers of Ireland that joined the Palmers, such as Katherine Wellesley 'of Ireland, remaining in Ludlow', may have been influenced by historic relationships. Ludlow, and the Marches more generally, had historic ties to Ireland as their lords – such as the de Lacys, Grenvilles and Mortimers – had held a stake in the English attempts to conquer and hold Ireland throughout the late Middle Ages.⁹⁵ The Mortimers were a predominant Marcher family and it was through this family that the Yorkists claimed lineage from Edward III. Their base in the Marches was originally Wigmore but from the early fifteenth century shifted to favour Ludlow. Richard, Duke of York, inherited the Mortimer estates from his uncle, Edmund Mortimer (d. 1425), and Ludlow became one of his principal sites for his household.⁹⁶ In 1437, York enrolled alongside his wife Cecily Neville in the Palmers' Guild.⁹⁷ While maintaining a vast landed base in the Welsh

Marches, the Mortimers were also part of the group of English magnates who held lands and castles in Ireland, and the Duke of York was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland in 1447.⁹⁸ Local men went to Ireland with the Mortimers, and surname evidence suggests that some Ludlow men settled in Ireland.⁹⁹ Trim, County Meath (the home of the aforementioned John Welshe of Trim/Coventry), had been in the possessions of the Mortimers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁰⁰ Other evidence suggests that a small number of Irish men and women settled in Ludlow from the thirteenth century onwards, likely from the Mortimer lands in County Meath.¹⁰¹

While the nobility of medieval England proved themselves avid members of fraternities, whether those local to them or more sizeable regional/national ones, the presence of the noble families from abroad is more of a surprise. Yet in 1497/8, the Countess of Caminha, Teresa de Távora, joined the guild, along with one of her sons, Diego Sotomayor.¹⁰² It is possibly through their connection with the court of Castile that Távora and Sotomayor became involved with the Palmers in the late fifteenth century. Teresa de Távora's husband, Pedro Álvarez de Sotomayor, had lost part of his family's lands in Castile following a troubled relationship with Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. Following the death of her husband in 1496, Teresa de Távora appealed to Isabella to return those lands to their eldest son, Álvaro, which was granted. Was the enrolment of de Távora and her other son, Diego, connected in any way to the relationship between Castile and England that had been ratified in a new marriage treaty for Catherine of Aragon and Prince Arthur earlier in 1497?¹⁰³ Yet there are no other individuals connected with Castile who enrolled (with the exception of Catherine of Aragon five years later in 1502), and there is an absence of enrolment from Iberia more generally, despite the strong trading connections between Iberia and England in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹⁰⁴ In fact, the manuscript folio that notes the countess and her son also contains the entries of English women and men, *and* the enrolment of the bishop of Troyes (France), providing a jumble of locations in which the guild had a presence, even if a minor one.¹⁰⁵

Few conclusions can be reached as to whether any historic ties to overseas locations played a decisive role in the enrolment of aliens in the Palmers' Guild. Local guilds offered plenty of opportunities to newcomers: access to networks, employment opportunities and a community of brethren that could act as a surrogate family.¹⁰⁶ Across England, aliens joined local fraternities: merchants from Antwerp left money to the fraternity of Our Lady in St Botolph Billingsgate, London, and Hull's immigrant mercantile population left bequests to local fraternities.¹⁰⁷ Even in instances

when aliens created their own expatriate fraternities, they continued to participate in local ones at the same time.¹⁰⁸ The Palmers, while far from a local guild, may have offered similar benefits (for they brought access to localised communities of Palmers, fostered through the guild's solester and annual feasting). The benefits, too, offered opportunities beyond the immediate area, allowing aliens to tap into a network of members across Wales and England. These secular opportunities might have been more attractive to the mercantile contingent and those aliens that chose to settle in England. The spiritual benefits, including accessing a community of over 18,000 individuals who were required to pray for each other, in addition to the guild priests, were important benefits to all. For the Frenchman John Hardwarman, who died in Ludlow in 1516/17 and was enrolled posthumously, prayers for the soul were the primary resulting benefit.¹⁰⁹ The result of alien membership was one of increased diversity within the community of the guild.

The preceding discussion on foreign membership has been guided by the sources; in other words, it has focused on who the officers of the Palmers' Guild decided to enter under the heading of *extranei* (best translated as 'stranger' or 'foreigner'). Foreigners were not only or exclusively men and women who lived outside of England or Wales.¹¹⁰ At the end of each year's book of new recruits came one or two folios which were reserved for *extranei*. This included people from counties that were not part of the guild's normal collection route, primarily Norfolk, Sussex, Lincolnshire and Hampshire, as well as individuals from outside of the British Isles, like the Countess of Caminha. But the Gascon and Irish members were not included under as *extranei*: they were recorded under the location they were in when joining the guild, such as Bristol, London, Ludlow and Coventry. For the Palmers, then, 'strangers' were not those of another nationality, but those that enrolled from a location that the guild stewards did not routinely visit.

Likewise, those that lived in *pura Wallia*, also known as the principality of Wales, were not differentiated in any way from other members of the Palmers. The guild's collection route regularly included destinations within *pura Wallia*, such as Conway, Beaumaris, Caernarfon, Bangor, Aberystwyth and Carmarthen. The route of the stewards often followed established routes through the hills (for example, Welshpool to Machynlleth to Aberystwyth) and followed the coast down to Cardigan, avoiding upland areas within the Principality.¹¹¹ The landscape may have been an influence in Welsh recruitment, being less easy to traverse, and a similar reasoning may be applied to the absence of the guild making forays across the Pennines into Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland.

Conclusion

Without the desire of Henry VIII to engage England's historic enemy of France in warfare, the membership of the Ludlow guild would have been smaller in scope and possessed more insular networks. Yet with the Crown's actions, the occupation of Tournai led to the movement of the guild overseas, albeit briefly. The guild's subsequent activities and expansion of its brethren were avenues to advance the guild's prestige while also providing positive financial implications. An increased membership was a benefit to the entire brethren, especially when the guild was recruiting the elite, whether they were from England and Wales or mainland Europe. The elite (secular and ecclesiastical) sometimes gave higher donations, bolstering the coffers of the guild, which in turn paid for more priests to pray for the souls of the brethren, or to support those in need.¹¹² Moreover, in a time when Catholicism was beginning to fracture, members of the Church from across polities were voluntarily engaging in an orthodox organisation that crossed geographic boundaries.

The Palmers' Guild was connected to, and indeed reflected, national and international tensions of the early sixteenth century. A number of influential individuals who emerge in the later Henrician court are found referenced within the guild's activities, providing some of their earlier activities before appearing on the national stage. In some ways, this chapter provides a parallel route to diplomatic history but through the lens of a socio-religious institution. While there is more research that can be undertaken, particularly through an exploration of archives in Iberia, what arises most clearly from this chapter is that the records of one single – but unique – guild provides an alternative way to trace individual and collective experiences in sixteenth-century Europe. As the preceding analysis and discussion has made clear, using records of institutions that appear 'local' or records that were created for a specific reason (in this case, recording membership and activities of a guild) is fundamental to studying late medieval and early modern society. Approaching political history through a bottom-up, archival-focused methodology is deserving of a central place within the mainstream approaches to historical study.

Notes

1. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 11r; LB/5/3/36, ff. 12v, 24v.
2. The payment notes that Yenance was sent during Lent, which took place between 15 February (Ash Wednesday) and 1 April (Easter Sunday) in 1515.
3. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 11v.

4. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 12r.
5. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 12v. The accounts that survive are scribbled, out of order, and at times payments are noted twice (as *memoranda* to remind the clerk of payments for the annual accounting). Whichever way the sums are added up – with or without repeated notes of payment – the amount does not total the £310 that the clerk notes in his ‘neat’ and final copy of expenses relating to Rome.
6. The lender is named only as ‘Master Dyer’. It may have been Richard Dyer, a local merchant and previous steward of the guild (1497–1501). Details of the loan and its repayment can be found in SA: LB/5/3/36.
7. SA: LB/5/3/36, f. 24v.
8. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 34r. and LB/5/3/4, f. 31v.
9. SA: LB/5/3/10, f. 10r. Rodington was also known as Rodenhurst. Alongside Rodenhurst/Rodington, Leighton was a member of the gentry, leasing Madeley manor and was active in Eaton-upon-Tern (both in Shropshire). TNA: C 1/869/46; ‘Madeley: Manor and Other Estates’, in *A History of the County of Shropshire*, vol. 11, Telford, ed. G.C. Baugh and C.R. Elrington (London, 1985). *British History Online*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/salop/vol11/pp35–40>.
10. Another example of a pardon not restricted to members was that obtained by the guild of St Peter of Milan and St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins, which granted a 40-day pardon for those who attended masses at the high altar of the Dominican convent in Cambridge. Robert Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007), 244.
11. *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 5, 1398–1404, eds. W.H. Bliss and J.A. Twemlow (London, 1904), 316.
12. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 129r.
13. William Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England, 1327–1534* (Cambridge, 1962), 11.
14. SA: LB/5/3/36.
15. When Vivaldi departed England in 1535 to move back to the Continent permanently, he may have amassed a fortune of £20,000. Michael E. Bratchel, ‘Regulation and Group Consciousness in the Later History of London Italian Merchant Colonies’, *Journal of European Economic History*, 9, no. 3 (Winter 1980), 588.
16. TNA: C 1/337/39, C 1/351/7; Michael E. Bratchel, ‘Italian Merchant Organization and Business Relationships in Early Tudor London’, *Journal of European Economic History*, 7, no. 1 (Spring 1978), 24–5.
17. TNA: C 1/337/39.
18. The £130 sent to the warden in the August after his departure is the only sum that aligns with the final sum recorded for Vivaldi’s fee.
19. For Vivaldi’s licenses to trade see TNA: C 76/197, m. 26; *L&P*, vol. 2, nos. 1057, 1323.
20. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England*, 509–10.
21. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life* (London, 2019), 31–4.
22. *L&P*, vol. 1, nos. 2641, 2642; William Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors Before the Reformation* (Oxford, 1974), 99.
23. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England*, 504.
24. For instance, in August 1516, Gigli wrote to Andrea Ammonio that Vivaldi and Marruffo requested that their letters be sent via France, rather than Germany. *L&P*, vol. 2, no. 2243(2).

25. An analysis of the numbers and names of visitors can be found in Joel Rosenthal, 'The English Hospice in Rome: A Late Medieval Home Away from Home', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 108, no. 1, (Winter 2022), 44–67.
26. Alternative spelling includes Elisabeth Keffyn. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 19v; George Hay, 'Pilgrims and the Hospice, Appendix 12', *The English Hospice in Rome, The Venerable Sexcentenary Issue*, 21 (May 1962), 131.
27. Rosenthal, 'The English Hospice in Rome', 63.
28. Quote from Rosenthal, 'The English Hospice in Rome', 66.
29. George Hay, 'Pilgrims and the Hospice', *The Venerable*, 19, no. 2 (May 1959), 331.
30. George Parks, *The English Traveler to Italy*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1954), 364; Brian Newns, 'The Hospice of St Thomas and the English Crown 1474–1538', *The English Hospice in Rome, The Venerable Sexcentenary Issue*, 21 (May 1962), 166–71.
31. Cecil H. Clough, 'Three Gigli of Lucca in England During the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries: Diversification in a Family of Mercery Merchants', *The Ricardian*, 13 (June 2003), 140.
32. 'The Battle of the Spurs', Flemish school, sixteenth century. Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 406784.
33. The negotiation process is outlined in detail in Charles Cruickshank, *The English Occupation of Tournai, 1513–1519* (Oxford, 1971), 2–6.
34. Cruickshank, *The English Occupation of Tournai*, 9.
35. For politics and ideas of kingship relating to Henry's time as ruler of Tournai see Neil Murphy, 'Tournai Under Tudor Rule: Cooperation or Opposition?', *Mémoires de la Société Royale d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Tournai*, 14, 35–70; C.S.L. Davies, 'Tournai and the English Crown, 1513–1519', *The Historical Journal*, 41, no. 1 (March 1998), 1–26.
36. Steven Gunn, *The English People at War in the Age of Henry VIII* (Oxford, 2018).
37. Gunn, *English People at War*, chapter 3; David Green, *The Hundred Years War: A People's History* (New Haven, 2015), chapter 10.
38. Cruickshank, *English Occupation*; Davies, 'Tournai and the English Crown', 1–26; Gunn, *English People at War*, 17–19; Steven Gunn, 'War, Dynasty and Public Opinion in Early Tudor England,' in *Authority and Consent in Tudor England*, ed. George Bernard and Steven Gunn (Aldershot, 2002), 269–72; Alexander Hodgkins, 'Rebellion and Warfare in the Tudor State: Military Organisation, Weaponry, and Field Tactics in Mid-Sixteenth Century England' (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2013).
39. Murphy, 'Tournai Under Tudor Rule', 44–45.
40. TNA: E 179/242/25, m. 14; Person 32255, *England's Immigrants 1330–1550*: <https://www.englishimmigrants.com/person/32255>.
41. Michael Wyatt, *An Italian Encounter with Tudor England: a Cultural Politics of Translation* (Cambridge, 2005), 54, 58; Clough, 'Three Gigli of Lucca', 143–4; Bart Lambert, '"Nostrì Fratelli da Londra": The Lucchese Community in Late Medieval England', in *Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Michele Campopiano and Helen Fulton (York, 2018), 101; Cinzia Maria Sicca, 'Pawns of International Finance and Politics: Florentine Sculptors at the Court of Henry VIII', *Renaissance Studies*, 20, no. 1 (February 2006), 21–2; Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors of England*, Parks, *The English Traveler*, 303.
42. There were multiple layers of political manoeuvring relating to Tournai between France, England, and the papacy. See Wilkie, *Cardinal Protectors of England*, 89–92.
43. *Tudor Letters Project*, <https://tudornetworks.net>.

44. The guild's records place Downe back in Ludlow by January 1518. SA: LB/5/2/1405.
45. This is based on a reading of all of his correspondence between August 1515 and December 1516. There are two months of unaccounted time between 16 May and 19 July 1516, one month of unaccounted time between 27 August and 27 September 1516 and seven weeks between 4 October and 22 November 1516. All of these letters are dated at Rome.
46. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 183r.
47. Kevin Down, 'The Administration of the Diocese of Worcester Under the Italian Bishops, 1497–1535', *Midland History* (June 1995), 1–20.
48. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 83r.
49. SA: LB/5/3/5. For his positions in the diocese see Down, 'Worcester Under the Italian Bishops', 11.
50. SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 3; LB/5/3/40, ff. 69r, 183r.
51. SA: LB/5/3/9, f. 38v; Down, 'Worcester Under the Italian Bishops', 10.
52. Down, 'Worcester Under the Italian Bishops', 7.
53. Bell held many positions, including rector of Quatt, Shropshire (admitted 6 September 1509), was appointed archdeacon of Gloucester in 1518 and became bishop of Worcester in 1539. Alfred Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, 1501 to 1540* (Oxford, 1974), 38–9.
54. For the presentment see Down, 'Worcester Under the Italian Bishops', 7. The connections between Prior Malvern and Ludlow extended beyond the guild, as he took legal action (along with the prior of Bromfield) against Richard Troyte (barber) of Ludlow in the town court in 1527/8: SA: LB/9/1/7.
55. Parker's resignation from the vicarage is noted in 1524 in the bishop of Hereford's registers, as well as the patronage of the prioress and convent of Aconbury. See *The Register of Charles Bothe, Bishop of Hereford (1516–1535)*, ed. A.T. Bannister (Hereford, 1921).
56. SA: LB/5/1/2, m. 6.
57. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 72v.
58. Clough, 'Three Gigli of Lucca', 143.
59. Rachael Harkes, 'Joining a Fraternity in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Palmers' Guild of Ludlow, c. 1250–1551' (PhD. diss., University of Durham, 2021), 148–9.
60. SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 36r; LB/5/3/2, f. 84r; LB/5/3/9, f. 17v; LB/5/3/8, f. 6v. Their involvement can be found in *Hall's Chronicle* (London, 1809), 537.
61. Cruickshank, *The English Occupation*, 13.
62. SA: LB/5/3/5, f. 55v; LB/5/1/4, m. 7. For the importance of enrolling deceased family members into the guild see Rachael Harkes, 'Remembering the Dead: Postmortem Guild Membership in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 63, no. 2 (April 2024), 323–48.
63. For Belknap see SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 31r. For the Savage family and servant enrolment see SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 140r; LB/5/3/6, ff. 50v, 51r; LB/5/3/7, f. 68v; LB/5/3/8, f. 11r. Savage's role at Tournai is also discussed in *Hall's Chronicle*, 566.
64. Gunn, *English People at War*, 127.
65. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 73r.
66. All these examples can be found in LB/5/3/40, f. 183r. Robert Leighton does not appear to be a direct relation to Hugh Leighton, discussed earlier in the chapter. All

of the older male relatives of Hugh Leighton, so far as is known, were called William. See W.G.D. Fletcher, ed., *Shropshire Parish Registers: Diocese of Lichfield*, vol. 14 (Shropshire, 1921), iv.

67. Anita Hewerdine, *The Yeomen of the Guard and the Early Tudors: The Formation of a Royal Bodyguard* (London, 2012).

68. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 164v. His last will and testament is: TNA: PROB 11/27/57.

69. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 147r; LB/5/3/5, f. 41v; LB/5/3/9, f. 25v; LB/5/3/7, f. 43r; LB/5/3/40, f. 2r. The list of payments to these men can be found in TNA: E 101/61/10.

70. TNA: E 36/236; SA: LB/5/3/3, f. 34v.

71. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 12r.

72. TNA: E 36/236; SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 62r; LB/5/3/2, f. 164v.

73. For example, TNA: E 36/236. Some entries detail specific horsemen, and a couple of lists do survive of archers and 'bills' for English captains, as found in TNA: E 101/56/20.

74. Gunn, *English People at War*, 17–18.

75. For example, TNA: E 101/203/9.

76. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, 111.

77. Ben R. McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 32, no. 3 (July 1993), 195–225; Barbara A. Hanawalt and Ben R. McRee, 'The Guilds of Homo Prudens in Late Medieval England', *Continuity and Change*, 7, no. 2 (August 1992), 163–79.

78. Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250–1550* (Oxford, 2015), 50–51, 149–86.

79. In particular, see [Chapters 1](#) and [2](#) of the present volume.

80. LB/5/3/40, f. 209v. For the different rates for deceased members: Harkes, 'Remembering the Dead', 20–22.

81. Murphy, 'Tournai Under Tudor Rule', 17–20.

82. It seems unlikely that a guild would view itself as a particular nationality; if one did, the Ludlow guild's identity was tied up with a Welsh-English identity unique to the Welsh Marches.

83. Discussion of aliens in guilds is absent from: Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c. 1350–1558* (Woodbridge, 1996); David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 2000); Caroline M. Barron, 'Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 1985), 13–37; Gervase Rosser, 'The Town and Guild of Lichfield in the Late Middle Ages', *Staffordshire Archaeological and History Society Transactions*, 27 (1985), 39–47; Gervase Rosser, 'Party List: Making Friends in Medieval English Guilds', in *London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. Matthew Davies and Andrew Prescott (Donington, 2008), 118–34. There are no identifiable aliens in: Mary Bateson, ed., *Cambridge Gild Records* (London, 1903); Mairi Macdonald, ed., *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2007); W.B. Bickley, ed. *The Register of the Guild of Knowle in the County of Warwick, 1451–1535* (Walsall, 1894). For a few studies on aliens in England see W.M. Ormrod, Bart Lambert and Jonathan Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300–1550* (Manchester, 2019); Joshua Ravenhill, 'The Experience of Aliens in Later Medieval London and the Negotiation of Belonging, 1400–1540' (PhD diss., University of York, 2019); Justin Colson, 'Alien

Communities and Alien Fraternities in Later Medieval London', *The London Journal*, 35, no. 2 (July 2010), 111–43; Charlotte Berry, *The Margins of Late Medieval London, 1430–1540* (London, 2022).

84. SA: LB/5/3/1, f. 5v. He does not appear in the *England's Immigrants* database.

85. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 26v. The folio only partially survives so his name is lost.

86. New recruits from Bristol ranged from twenty to fifty-two per annum. SA: LB/5/3/2–10. For the relationship between Bordeaux and Bristol, see E. Carus-Wilson, 'The Overseas Trade of Bristol', in *Studies in the English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Eileen Power and Michael Postan (London, 1933), 183–246. For its state in the early sixteenth century, see Peter Fleming, *Late Medieval Bristol: Time, Space and Power* (Donington, 2024), 108–10; Margaret Condon and Evan Jones, 'Bristol 1509–10: Particulars of Account of Nicholas Browne, Deputy Butler, for Presage and Butlerage' (Bristol, 2023).

87. Anne Crawford, *Bristol and the Wine Trade* (Bristol, 1984), 9–12.

88. Fleming, *Late Medieval Bristol*, 108.

89. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 29r.

90. Michael Bennett, 'Late Medieval Ireland in a Wider World', in *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, vol. 1, ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge, 2018), 345.

91. Charles Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), 19.

92. Bennett, 'Late Medieval Ireland in a Wider World', 345.

93. Colm Lennon, 'The Parish Fraternities of County Meath in the Late Middle Ages', *Riocht na Midhe*, 19 (June 2008), 91.

94. Lennon, 'Parish Fraternities', 94–101.

95. The Genvilles held a moiety of Ludlow before it came, through marriage, to the Mortimer family in 1307, before then acquiring the second moiety in 1358: Michael Faraday, *Ludlow: 1085–1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), 7–9.

96. Faraday, *Ludlow*, 12.

97. SA: LB/5/3/25, m. 1.

98. Brendan Smith, 'Transnational Lordship and the Plantagenet Empire: The Mortimer Lords of Wigmore, 1247–1425', *Welsh History Review*, 29, no. 1 (June 2018), 27–50; James L. Gillespie, 'Richard, Duke of York as King's Lieutenant in Ireland: The White Rose A-Blooming', *The Ricardian*, 5, no. 69 (June 1980), 194–201.

99. Faraday, *Ludlow*, 139.

100. Smith, 'Transnational Lordship', 27–50.

101. SA: LB/5/3/7, f. 1r. 'Chester' is written in the margin next to her name, suggesting that at some point she moved there. The strength of Chester's Irish community – driven by trade – may well explain Wellesley's move to that city: 'Later Medieval Chester 1230–1550: Economy and Society, 1350–1550', in *A History of the County of Chester* vol. 5, *Part 1, the City of Chester: General History and Topography*, ed. C.P. Lewis and A.T. Thacker (London, 2003), 64–80. For Irish settlement in Ludlow: Faraday, *Ludlow*, 139.

102. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 129r.

103. For the impact of Henry VII's diplomacy on Spanish trade, see Gordon Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English Trade with Spain in the Early Tudor Period* (Bristol, 1954), 31–55.

104. The trading connections can be found in many works of scholarship including Flávio Miranda, 'Before the Empire: Portugal and the Atlantic Trade in the Late Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2013), 69–85; Fleming, *Late Medieval Bristol*, 109–17; Jesús Angel Solórzano Telechea, 'Medieval Seaports of the Atlantic Coast of Spain', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 21, no. 1, (June 2009), 89, 99; Jesús Angel Solórzano Telechea, 'From the Mediterranean to the Atlantic: The Role of the Town-Ports of Northern Iberia in the First Internationalization of the European Economy in the Middle Ages', in *Constructing Iberian Identities, 1000–1700*, ed. Thomas W. Barton, Marie A. Kelleher and Antonio M. Zaldívar (Turnhout, 2022), 39–53.
105. SA: LB/5/3/2, f. 129r.
106. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity*, 50–1, 149–186; Rosser, 'Party List', 118–34.
107. Ravenhill, 'The Experience of Aliens', 140–41.
108. Colson, 'Alien Communities and Alien Fraternities', 112, 125–6; Berry, *Margins of Late Medieval London*, 67.
109. SA: LB/5/3/40, f. 206r. The Palmers' ordinances state that they would pay for the funerals of their members but there is no evidence of payment for Hardwarman's funeral in the extant accounts. It is worth noting that enrolment of the deceased into fraternities was a popular practice in the late Middle Ages. See Harkes, 'Remembering the Dead', 22–6.
110. See, for example, Brendan Smith, 'Migrants and Borders in the Medieval English World', in *Rethinking Migration: Challenging Borders, Citizenship and Race*, ed. Bridget Anderson (Bristol, 2025), 105–6; W.M. Ormrod, Bart Lambert and Jonathan Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300–1550* (Manchester, 2019).
111. For example, SA: LB/5/3/6 or LB/5/3/32. Ralph A. Griffiths argues that the late fifteenth century increase of members with Welsh names shows an increased interest in the town of Ludlow by the Welsh: 'After Glyn Dŵr: An Age of Reconciliation?', *Sir John Rhŷs Memorial Lecture* (2001), 151–2, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/1969/pba117p139.pdf>.
112. For example, SA: LB/5/3/37, f. 6r. For an analysis of the financial circumstances of the guild and how they used their funds see Harkes, 'Joining a Fraternity', 263–4.

Conclusion

During his itineraries, the Tudor antiquarian John Leland spoke of Ludlow largely in terms of the Palmers' Guild, or, as he called it, 'a brothar-hode therein foundyd in the name of St. John the Evangeliste'.¹ Leland credited the Palmers with having 'much avauncyd' the church of St Laurence, which was 'very faire, and large, and richely adornyd, and taken for the fayrest in all those quartars'. He highlighted the Palmers' legacy of building projects, specifically the construction of a 'fayr howse at the west end of the paroche churche yard' for its priests and the maintenance of a 'hospitall or almeshouse of a 30. pore folks'.² The central place occupied by the Palmers in Leland's description of the town makes it clear that he saw the guild as one of the defining features of Ludlow. Yet the Palmers' role in Ludlow was the least remarkable aspect of this fraternity. The guild drew in members from across Wales, through England in the north-west, midlands, south-west, London, the home counties, East Anglia, and Yorkshire (to a small extent), as well as a small number from Ireland, modern-day France and Iberia. Crossing rural and urban divides, it proved accessible for members from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The guild's membership brought together the multiple, frequently distinct communal spheres of late medieval England – public and private, lay and religious, social and political – encompassing over 18,000 members, and probably many thousands more.

One of the main arguments of this book has been that membership of large fraternities was an integral aspect of late medieval society – it was not simply a feature but was ingrained in the everyday experiences of men and women. The meanings associated with joining a religious guild were varied, assigned by localised groups of members as suited their specific needs and circumstances. Due to this conceptual malleability, membership of the guild could, for instance, be employed in local areas as a

benchmark of the suitability of an individual for involvement in urban and rural governance. But despite this, the Palmers' Guild never became an exclusive organisation and instead inducted individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds. Any real or imagined hierarchies within the guild's membership cannot now be discerned, thanks to the patterns of survival among the records; what can be substantially – if not wholly – reconstructed, however, is the diversity of its brothers and sisters, and this book speaks to the insights that can be gained through the systematic study of this diversity.

Of course, central to the approach of this study has been to read against the grain of the surviving records to understand exactly what and, indeed, who, influenced the decisions made by thousands of individuals to join one particular fraternity. The location of the guild at Ludlow partially explains the attractions of membership and the meanings that membership assumed in a regional context. The Council of the Marches dominated the structures of the region's governing spheres, generating interaction between individuals, urban and rural, lay and ecclesiastical alike, through its judicial and administrative roles. Upon Prince Arthur's arrival at Ludlow in 1493, he assumed responsibility for the Welsh Marches alongside the Council, whose membership overlapped with that of his own household. The integration of Arthur's councillors and their servants, as well as his own probable involvement with the Palmers, transformed the significance of guild membership in the late fifteenth century. The increased enrolment of major players in the governance of the Marches is testament to the perceived power and potential opportunity for the cultivation of useful social ties offered by guild membership. While it is challenging to discern the extent to which individuals took advantage of this opportunity, especially given the loss (or absence) of records of attendance at feasts or informal gatherings of brethren, the patterns identified in this book have shown clearly the rise of guild membership after the integration of the Council with the Palmers.

The household and family were two additional influences upon the popularity of membership of the Palmers' Guild in the late middle ages. Expectations of good order, reputation and pious provision permeated urban, rural, mercantile, gentry and noble households alike. It is within this context that households, comprising servants and masters, engaged widely with the Palmers' Guild. The acceleration of this trend at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries reveals the importance of the precedent set by Arthur and his household, as well as the power of familial networks, illustrated so clearly in the example of the Staffords. Family expectations, specifically patrilineal relationships, brought continued involvement in the Palmers over multiple generations.

While different individuals, but particularly groups, encouraged guild membership, the guild itself stimulated membership through its structures and actions. The system of payment-by instalment was undoubtedly a factor that accounted for the wide social range of brethren. It made fraternal membership accessible to either previously under-represented groups of society or to those, like the urban and rural elites, who would otherwise have joined further on in their career, but who instead were able to join many years before taking an active role in local governance. Assisting the accessibility of membership were the actions of the guild across the country, for the stewards collected fees from the villages, towns or cities of brethren; in each respective location, they facilitated and enacted a sense of shared community and conviviality on their rides through expenditure on food and drink for brethren. In contrast to the transient presence of the guild stewards, solesters provided a permanent reminder of, and conduit to, the council of the guild at Ludlow, and worked to encourage microcosms of membership. The guild enacted a deliberate policy of inclusion and engagement among its members.

We might, of course, ask *why* the guild decided to undertake to encourage a greater and more diverse membership. While any conclusions drawn can only be speculative (as the surviving records do not explicitly explain policy changes nor are they a complete run), they repay consideration. It is tempting to suggest that the principal concern was financial but a quick appraisal of guild finances casts doubt on this (somewhat pessimistic) assumption. The guild's two different streams of income – rents and membership fees – worked to support each other. Rent from the guild's substantial portfolio of properties went towards maintaining the guild priests and their college. In a cyclical manner, the membership fees contributed to the building works and repairs of those properties that supported the priests.³ The rental income from their property in 1501/2 was £81 21 ½ d and £80 12d in 1503/4, far surpassing rental incomes of other parish fraternities in the early sixteenth century, like Louth's guilds of Holy Trinity and Blessed Virgin Mary who respectively collected annual sums of £25 5s 2d and £56 8s 6d.⁴ After expenses for a number of spiritual provisions (for example, the paying of guild priests, the keeping of lights and the wages of singing men), expenses due to the bailiffs and lords of each respective location in which the guild had property, and the fees of the guild officers, they were in debt for just over £9 and £4 for each respective year. The nearest year for which membership income is recorded, unfortunately, is not until 1514/15, when the guild received approximately £156 in membership fees.⁵ Assuming that this figure aligns fairly closely with the income from membership in the early years of the century, then the guild could easily make up a deficit of £9 or £4.⁶ Their building projects

averaged a cost of £50 per year during 1505–8, but most years were less than that.⁷ If the policy changes begun in the late fifteenth century had been born out of financial need then within a relatively short period of time this was overcome and the guild had established an apparatus by which to remain financially secure. This, surely, provided both the rationale and the means to encourage a diversified membership, but it was one that was mutually beneficial to both the guild and its members.

Individuals were genuinely spurred by piety and by an interest in engagement with networks of community and friendship, and the outlet through which they fulfilled those aims was influenced by their social environment. The social and geographical reach of the Palmers, and of other large fraternities, was therefore the result of individual preferences and persuasions but also of varying pressures and influences that were woven into the fabric of late medieval society. I have argued throughout this book that localised, corporate groups – the family, the lay or ecclesiastical household, or the ruling groups of local or regional elites in town and country – influenced decisions to join a fraternity. Family, in particular, swayed the decision to join the Palmers, transmuting the artificiality of the familial language adopted by guilds ('brother' and 'sister') into the world of real blood relations. In this, and in other respects, the reasons for joining late medieval fraternities are entangled in histories of domesticity and mentalities and the practices of urban and rural politics. As has become apparent, individual volition is not a wholly appropriate viewpoint from which to understand the membership of guilds; more than anything, it has become clear that historians should not proffer singular explanations for their composition.

The answers to why certain groups of individuals joined the Palmers' Guild are, in all likelihood, equally applicable to other major guilds, with membership that was both regional and national. Large fraternities activated, and were embedded within, the social and political processes of various kinds of community. In this sense, the utility of fraternities such as the Palmers extended far beyond spiritual support, in terms of *pro anima* prayers, indulgences and fraternal prayers. Their appeal was instead rather more social and political in nature, which is demonstrated especially in the membership patterns of the urban and rural governing elites. While the nuances of what guild membership meant in each respective community varied, a uniting factor was the guild's embodiment and enhancement of the common values of shared identity, whatever form this identity took in each situation or locality.

The relationship between the Council of the Marches and the Palmers' Guild raises the possibility that other devolved royal agencies, such as the Council of the North (initially established in 1483), might have had a

similar effect in their sphere of geographical influence. But in particular, the evidence provided in this book argues strongly for the centrality of the household as the motivation for, and enabling mechanism of, guild membership. It might be that the Palmers' Guild is unique in this respect (with both masters and servants joining due to their unusual system of payment-by-instalments), and future studies might reveal that servants were more likely to join separate, cheaper, fraternities than their masters; in any case, the enrolling of servants in any guild bolstered the good governance of a household. This is a consideration conspicuous by its absence in current discussions on the morality and operation of households. Certainly, household guild membership bridges some gaps in the study of domesticity, expanding our understanding of the short- and long-term influences within a master-servant relationship, the extension of the domestic sphere into institutions, and the social and religious obligations placed upon householders.

While guilds sit across sub-sections of research into medieval society – interacting with social, religious, political and economic historical study – the methodology used in this book can be deployed in future studies more broadly. Firstly, records that were created for one organisation rarely, if ever, solely relate to that organisation. They reflect larger trends in society and should be read against the grain to draw conclusions beyond the purposes for which they were created. Secondly, records that may at first glance appear restricted in their use – a list of thousands of names, for example – should be treated with as much interest as accounts, letters or litigation. When used in conjunction with other records, such historical sources – as is shown throughout this book – can be the key to revealing fundamental relationships, the creation of communities and networks, and the beliefs held by society. The Palmers' Guild of Ludlow encapsulates this by leaving piles of accounts, deeds, and membership lists that have allowed the multifaceted lives of ordinary and extraordinary people of medieval society to be revealed in this book.

Notes

1. Lucy Toulmin Smith, ed., *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535–1543*, vol. 2, part 5, (Carbondale, 1964), 76.
2. Toulmin Smith, *Itinerary of John Leland*, vol. 2, part 5, 76.
3. Michael Faraday, ed., *Deeds of the Palmers' Gild* (2012), xvi–xvii.
4. Claire M. Kennan, 'Guilds and Society in Louth, Lincolnshire, c. 1450–1550' (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2018), 307–8.
5. M.J. Angold, G.C. Baugh, Marjorie M. Chibnall, D.C. Cox, D.T.W. Price, Margaret Tomlinson and B.S. Trinder, 'Religious Guild: Ludlow, Palmers' Guild', in *A History*

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British History Online, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/salop/vol2/pp134-140>.

6. Certainly the number of new recruits in this year aligns with those of the first decade of the sixteenth century.

7. Faraday, *Deeds of the Palmers' Guild*, xvi, xxi.

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LB/5/3/1–12, Steward's Riding Books
LB/5/3/13–16, Debitoria (unpaid fines)
LB/5/3/19, Bill of expenses of journey in Midlands
LB/5/3/20–29, 31–2, Stewards' accounts
LB/5/3/30, 33–4, Warden's accounts
LB/5/3/36, Steward and Warden's *memoranda* book
LB/5/3/37–46, Clerk's receipt accounts
LB/5/3/46–61, Renter's accounts
LB/5/3/69–81, Rental rolls
LB/5/5/3, Contract
Ludlow Borough Records:
LB/9/1/7–23, Court of Record, Action Books
Shrewsbury Corporation Records:
3365/67, Assembly Book no. I
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215/37, Shrewsbury Borough and Abbey

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C 1/337/39: Chancery: Maruffo v The Archbishop of Dublin
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C 1/869/46, Chancery: Pyxley v Leighton
C 76/197, French Roll: enrolments of diplomatic matters

C 219/18, Parliamentary Election Writs and Returns, Henry VIII
 C 219/19, Parliamentary Election Writs and Returns, Edward VI
 CP 40/1076, Common Pleas
 E 36/236, Exchequer: Treasury of Receipt
 E 101/56/20, Exchequer: Musters at Tournai
 E 101/61/10, Exchequer: Account of Sir Norton
 E 101/203/9, Exchequer: Abstract of money due for works at Tournai
 E 179/242/25, Exchequer: Taxation
 LC 2/1, Accounts of Funerals and Mournings
 PROB 11, Prerogative Court of Canterbury and related Probate Jurisdictions
 SC 6/HENVIII/4996, Special Collections: Ministers' Accounts of Bromfield and Yale
 SC 12/17/90, Special Collections: Valor of Bromfield and Yale
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Introductory Note

References such as '178–9' indicate (not necessarily continuous) discussion of a topic across a range of pages. Wherever possible in the case of topics with many references, these have either been divided into subtopics or only the most significant discussions of the topic are listed. Because the entire work is about 'Palmer's' and 'fraternity', the use of these terms (and certain others which occur constantly throughout the book) as an entry point has been restricted. Information will be found under the corresponding detailed topics. Cross-references in a form such as '*See also individual names*' direct the reader to headings in a particular class (e.g. in this case 'Amore, Roger') rather than a specific '*individual names*' entry.

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